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WHITE HARNESSES

By the same author

MASTERS AND MASTERPIECES OF MUSIC

ALSATIAN

COLLIE

LABRADOR RETRIEVERS

THE PRINCIPAL BREEDS OF GUIDE DOGS

WHITE HARNESSES

The Story of Guide Dogs for the Blind

by

R. G. CARTER

WITH A FOREWORD BY
THE EARL OF LANESBOROUGH

ALTRINCHAM
JOHN SHERRATT & SON

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FOREWORD

By The Earl of Lanesborough

Chairman, The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

One of the hardest tasks of The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association is to communicate to the general public an accurate description of its purpose, for so much of the Guide Dog story is told by one person to another by word of mouth. A book about it is therefore most welcome.

The author of *White Harnesses* has, after painstaking research into every side of our work, written an account of Guide Dogs which is correct, informative, and easy to read. The splendid illustrations signify the results of training methods and techniques which have evolved from long experience and hard work.

My General Council and I hope that this book will be widely read by people of all ages. I feel confident that this will be the case, as the Association could not have grown to its present size and standing without a great volume of goodwill from its devoted supporters.

In our dog-loving society, dogs of all breeds have a welcome place of honour in our hearts. When a dog is dedicated to playing a dual role of Guide and companion, there comes about a unique and irresistible appeal—in White Harness a dog is not only an owner's best friend but is also the light which leads the blind fearlessly through their darkness.

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INTRODUCTION

THERE are now some seven hundred Guide Dogs for the Blind in Great Britain, and the number is steadily rising. Each one has been trained to help its owner to move about independently, to take up work and other interests. This book is the story of the dogs—of their selection, training, and remarkable achievements.

Although Guide Dogs have been in use in Britain for over thirty years, ever since the first ones were trained on a bit of waste land in New Brighton, many people have not seen one, or heard much about them. That the movement has grown, supported by voluntary subscriptions, to its present stature, is largely due to public appreciation of the great blessings the dogs bring to their blind owners.

It is not easy for sighted persons to imagine the captivity that blindness can bring. It is very difficult for a blind person to get about without an escort, and not even the closest relative can offer such service at will. To be able to move unescorted from place to place not only confers on the blind persons a valuable sense of independence but enables them to go to and from a paid occupation and to share actively in the life around them. The dog and its blind owner depend on each other, and this responsibility and companionship brings a new zest for life.

White Harnesses is not primarily an account of the advantages that Guide Dogs bring to their owners, but

is a book about the dogs themselves. It begins with a description of events in Europe which eventually resulted in dogs being scientifically trained in America, Britain, and other countries. It describes the evolution of the best breeds, the scientific selection and training of the puppies, and the final pairing of fully trained dog and blind person. This takes place at a Residential Centre of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, where blind student and dog undergo training together until they emerge as a confident team. How good this training is comes out in the stories about particular Guide Dogs.

This is a moving story of dogs and men at their best. There is a lesson for all in the patient education of the dogs and in the courageous use by the blind of their new "eyes", which take them from solitude once more into the living world.

R.G.C.

Chapter One

HOW IT BEGAN

THE first organized attempts to train dogs to assist the blind were made little more than fifty years ago. Like the conquest of space, now approaching its zenith, it is difficult to say exactly where and when the story began. Did space flight begin with the aeroplane? Or did a schoolboy start it all by making the first paper dart?

As far as the facts concern Great Britain's interest in systematically and scientifically providing blind persons with Guide Dogs, the story can justifiably be regarded as beginning with the success of the Germans in training dogs for police work before the First World War, an achievement they later developed for war purposes to a remarkable degree of efficiency. The Allies were so impressed by the valuable work these dogs were doing that they began to experiment themselves in the same field but, whereas the Allied forces terminated their interest and progress with the end of the war, the Germans did not, and continued to use dogs for police duties and as frontier guards.

Britain's interest in training dogs for the blind was stimulated by the work of an American woman, Dorothy Eustis, and her husband, George. A few years

after the end of the First World War they were living in Switzerland, not far from the Swiss-German border and, at their home, Fortunate Fields, they were completely absorbed in the fascinating study of dogs. When they were in New York they had owned a German Shepherd dog, Hans, who possessed special qualities that encouraged them to try to find out all they could about the breed. Their Swiss home was situated conveniently near many of the German Shepherd dogs' spheres of work. In the surrounding areas were shrewd farmers who knew from first hand what the breed's qualities were, and they were able to provide ample scope for practical research.

Dorothy and George Eustis were intent on discovering two things: the possibilities of breeding scientifically a dog which could be used in the service of man; and, secondly, whether such a dog would be capable of adaptation for any job that might be required. They were convinced, rightly or wrongly, that only the working German Shepherd dog possessed the essential qualities which would justify their hopes.

Research, training, breeding and administration make a formidable undertaking for two people, and the Eustises were fortunate to persuade a fellow-American, Elliot Humphrey, to join them in order to develop the breeding and take part in the training aspects of the work. Humphrey had spent most of his life with animals; he had broken in horses for the Army, had trained animals for circuses, and had equipped an Antarctic expedition with a German Shepherd dog. He was an expert in genetics and animal psychology and his magazine articles had considerably interested the

owners of Fortunate Fields, whose invitation to him to join them, and the readiness of its acceptance, were to prove to be events of great importance.

The aims of Fortunate Fields were not achieved quickly. Before its collection of inmates could be developed to the stage of all-purpose dogs, a blue-print of more than thirty points had to be agreed in theory and then slowly evolved in flesh and blood. The dogs had to be highly teachable, and the methods of training had to be continually re-examined in the light of results. Sometimes a particularly teachable dog was not eventually willing to help a human being. Willingness had to be a vital part in a trained dog's make-up, and every effort was made to find ways of detecting it before training began.

The considerable activity and purpose of the establishment had not gone unnoticed in the neighbourhood, and visitors were often interested and impressed by what they saw. Local news travels as fast in Switzerland as elsewhere, and demands for working dogs were not long in arriving.

As a result, dogs found their ways into local police, military and Red Cross services where their success was outstanding. This, in its turn, produced much favourable comment.

In 1926, the Eustises were approached officially by the Swiss Police with a request to train dogs especially for police work. They accepted and consequently a member of the Swiss Police force attended Fortunate Fields for a course of training with selected dogs. This major step was followed by a request from the Swiss Army to provide a corps of messenger dogs to act as

extra communications in case of temporary breakdowns in the telephone and telegraph systems. Once again the achievements of the dogs were startling and effective.

The three partners of Fortunate Fields had as much work on their hands as they could cope with, but whenever a reasonable chance presented itself, George Eustis would go off to find out what other training establishments were doing, in case they could profit by the progress and knowledge of others. He spent some time in Germany visiting the Police dog training schools which the Germans had continued at the end of the war. At Potsdam, he came across a school where dogs were being trained to act as guides for blinded war veterans. This work was new to him and he thought it would be advisable for his wife to join him.

When Dorothy Eustis arrived and saw what was being attempted and achieved at Potsdam she realized she had found a path she had always hoped to find—a new task for dogs to undertake for human beings. She was astonished when she saw blind men and dogs walk safely around busy residential areas. One of her most vivid impressions was the complete change that had taken place in the men when they were guided by their dogs as compared with when they were alone. Dogs and owners walked off confidently and proudly, at a brisk pace, up and down steps, the dogs appearing to make the necessary decisions as they went. Considerably moved by her visit to the school she sent an article, discussing what she had witnessed, to an American magazine, the *Saturday Evening Post*. This was published in full under the heading of "The Seeing Eye."

On the day of its publication a young blind insurance

Plate 1. Teaching a puppy to sit. Note position of the left hand, and the retention of the leash.

Plate 2. Second stage of teaching to sit. The left hand is retained on the back until the position is good and the puppy is confident.

Plate 3. Shows how "Down" is taught from the sitting position. The leash is retained.

Plate 4. The "Down" position after constant practice.

clerk, Morris Frank, was being led home by a friend when they were accosted by a newspaper-seller who asked them to buy a copy—there was an article Mr. Frank should read about blind people and how dogs could help them. The article was read out to him at home and on an impulse young Morris wrote to Mrs. Eustis, whom he believed to be a journalist, asking if he could have such a dog and if these dogs could be trained in America. Mrs. Eustis wrote back to inform him that she was soon returning home to the United States and would telephone him. The result of this sequence of events was an invitation to Morris Frank to go to Switzerland and be trained with a dog, an invitation that was accepted in an outburst of joy and hope. Morris Frank went to Switzerland, was trained with a dog and returned to America. Utterly convinced, full of a new liberty and hope, he became a fiery crusader through whom Mrs. Eustis was able to begin a movement which ended in the formation of a Training School, The Seeing Eye,* in America.

Morris Frank's Guide Dog, Buddy, attracted the full glare of American publicity, and in a short space of time he became a prominent national figure. Blind persons wrote to him and asked if they could get dogs like his. Their requests were made known to Mrs. Eustis and, encouraged by Buddy and the young insurance clerk's obvious rebirth, she promised to help by training a few of her dogs in America with those blind persons she felt would most benefit. A well-known trainer of police dogs was engaged for the task and was advised technically

*"The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them." Proverbs, xx.12.

by a friend of Mr. Humphrey's, Willi Ebeling, who had extensive knowledge and experience of German Shepherd dogs. The combination was not a happy one. For Dorothy Eustis the simple answer to future training was to attract an instructor from Potsdam, but although she and Mr. Humphrey went to Europe for this purpose they were unrewarded. Instructors of quality were rare and could not be spared. The only possible solution open to them was to train their own at Fortunate Fields and use their own dogs for the purpose.

Fortunate Fields, however, was a going concern and fully committed, and more responsibility would strain the available resources. To give a start to the work, temporary accommodation under the name of "L'œil qui voit" (The Seeing Eye) was rented in Lausanne from a Swiss Army officer. A school for instructors needed students and, to ensure an adequate and steady supply of suitably qualified candidates, Mrs. Eustis attempted to enlist the co-operation of the official blind organizations of neighbouring countries, notably Switzerland, France, Italy and Britain. Although much lip service was given to the experiment, the flow of recruits showed considerable wastage, as it was discovered that the necessary qualifications were difficult to assess. Many withdrew voluntarily or were found to be unsuitable.

The success of women as kennel maids had encouraged a few to apply for training, but losses due to marriage and the extreme physical demands of the training proved them to be generally unsuitable. In these early days only three men acquitted themselves so well as to be considered qualified to train dogs and blind. One was so exceptional, William Debetaz, as to

be sent to America to begin instruction with the indefatigable Willi Ebeling. In 1932, the Seeing Eye of America had acquired its own premises in Morriston, New Jersey, and was firmly settled. For some time previously the dogs had been trained at Willi Ebeling's home, also in New Jersey, and the blind students boarded out in local hotels. The first American blind owners were extremely enthusiastic at the new and exceptional assistance they were being afforded.

In 1930, articles appeared in English newspapers, leading to correspondence in the *Liverpool Echo*, which discussed the exploits of the American dogs, revelations which fired a small band of English enthusiasts to seek out Mrs. Eustis. Later in the same year she met them in London and soon realized that their enthusiasm offered the possibility of making a start in England.

One of the leading figures in the group was Muriel Crooke,* in whom Mrs. Eustis recognized some of the wisdom and determination she herself possessed. Muriel Crooke was living in the north-west of England and was destined to play a vital part in the pioneering stages. One of the problems which confronted Mrs. Eustis and her English companions at the meeting was how the quarantine regulations would affect the supply of dogs. Anti-rabies precautions were very strict in England and there seemed no way in which dogs trained at Lausanne could bypass the six months in quarantine kennels. Mrs. Eustis explained that this period would prove far too long for a fully trained dog, many essentials of the training would have been forgotten, and

* Like Dorothy Eustis, Muriel Crooke was an Alsatian enthusiast with much experience in training dogs of her own.

there was nobody in England qualified to re-train. This in itself was a tremendous wastage of a trainer's time when the number of men able to do the work was so small. The same problem remained if the reverse procedure was adopted and the English blind went over to Switzerland: the dogs would be quarantined on the return journey.

The only possible solution in England, as Mrs. Eustis saw it, was to lend one of her trainers to come over to start the work, in the hope and expectation that there would be a supply of educable dogs in the country. The only person available and equipped for the task was Elliot Humphrey. Muriel Crooke undertook the onerous duties of honorary secretary and through her industry and vision solid foundations began to be laid. She was supported by Lady Kitty Ritson, an Alsatian enthusiast, Musgrave Frankland (Secretary of the Liverpool branch of the National Institute for the Blind) and Mrs. Bond.

Money was a most pressing problem, for there was virtually none at the disposal of the pioneers in England. The services of Mr. Humphrey were generously lent by the "Seeing Eye", the cost doubtless being borne by the generous Dorothy Eustis. A few of the first necessities, without which the work could hardly begin, were dogs and premises for training. The problem of land and premises was solved by the offer of a piece of spare ground with some wooden garages at Cardigan Road, New Brighton, Wallasey, Cheshire, which was made available by Mr. M. Prest, the owner. The first dogs were selected from breeders and others who readily came forward, but the worry of funds always lurked in the background. Flowers and garden produce gathered

in the shillings, but the pounds, which were vital, were only slowly accumulating.

The cost of training a dog was assessed at about £50, and it was resolved that the money should be raised as a scholarship for the dog pupil. There was no shortage of volunteers to undertake the collection of the money and as far as the first Organizing Committee was concerned a far better and far quicker start had been made than any of them had dared to hope.

Elliot Humphrey began his historic work in the summer of 1931 with seven dogs, all of which were trained as a class. Owing to his commitments in Switzerland, he undertook to supervise the early stages of training and left a qualified trainer, G. W. Debatz, who became the head of "Seeing Eye" in America, to do the practical work. The two visitors tested dogs in London, Birmingham and also in Wallasey, and from a total of twenty-eight dogs chose their first seven. The dogs were offered free with one exception, which cost £2 10*s*. Five blind men were selected as the first students, three of whom came from St. Dunstan's, the famous Institute for the Blind. One dog did not complete training owing to a bout of ill health and one of the candidates proved to be physically unsuitable, and temporarily spoiled a dog. The matching of the dogs with the blind persons was supervised by Mr. Humphrey, who then returned to Switzerland with his trainer. For £145 the four blind students were equipped with dogs and they later reported complete success and a new enthusiasm for life.

In the summer of 1932 Mr. Humphrey returned to Wallasey with another trainer, G. A. Gabriel. The same sequence of events was followed with another four

students matched successfully to dogs. By now the demand for dogs was increasing and another class was prepared and trained in the late autumn.

Unfortunately, money was still proving a tiresome problem. A meeting with the National Institute of the Blind disclosed that the method of collecting money was illegal, as the people involved were not representatives of a recognized body. The problem could only be solved by affiliation to the National Institute, who would then undertake to lend sums as they were required, but only after reports of each class over a period of some months warranted the commencement of another. It was additionally obvious that the services of Mr. Gabriel could not be retained indefinitely. A salaried trainer would be needed in Britain if the work was to develop.

Mrs. Eustis and Mr. Humphrey fully realized the importance of having a qualified trainer to ensure the consolidation of such a good start. Trainers were not easy to find, however, and it was not for some time that they were able to recommend a suitable man. In the meantime, Mr. Gabriel trained another class and was not relieved until October 1933, by the first permanent trainer in Britain, Captain Liakhoff, a Russian. Captain Liakhoff's arrival coincided with the efforts made by a Wallasey Councillor to improve the accommodation for the blind students, which resulted in Wallasey Corporation letting a house for the purpose. The friendly Tail Waggers, who had been taking a great interest in the work of the dogs, proposed that the Guide Dogs for the Blind Committee should amalgamate with them under the title of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (1934).

What of the dogs? The first classes trained were all German Shepherd dogs, or Alsatians as they were classed in this country. The trainers from the "Seeing Eye" were experts with the breed and were convinced of their adaptability for Guide Dog duties. They would consider no other breed. Ideal though the dogs were, and exciting and stirring as their new occupation was, the general public was slow to appreciate what was taking place. In the early thirties there were no police dogs in Britain, and the Army and R.A.F. had yet to begin their experiments in the war to come. Obedience classes at dog shows were few and far between. A number of people were unwilling to accept the idea of dogs being harnessed to the blind, and were suspicious of how they might be trained. Attempts were even made in some quarters to slow down or stop the progress of the experiment. Nor was the feeling simply passive, for attempts were made in some quarters to hinder the progress of the experiments and even to stop them. The factor which slowly convinced the public was the joyous testimony of the blind who came forward in ever-increasing numbers and bore living witness to the great value of what was being done for them.

What did the blind equipped with dogs experience which ultimately had a persuasive effect on the country as a whole? Two changes took place in their lives which were the immediate gifts of their new canine partners: one physical and the other psychological. Many blind people had been inactive for a long time. Blindness can be a lonely misfortune and with it there comes a lack of desire to attempt to do the ordinary things which the more fortunate do regularly and, as a result, keep their

bodies and limbs exercised. A dog has to be taken out, and with a dog a blind person can move freely as and when a whim takes him. With the dog there comes a friend, and a canine friend who needs meals and human affection and conversation. When friendship comes in at one window, loneliness flies out through another.

The first blind persons felt fitter in body and mind, and they were quick to tell their sighted neighbours, who, indeed, needed little telling, as the change was obvious and complete. The inhabitants of Wallasey began to respect the work being done in the town, and the return of blind persons to their homes all over the country fired off a chain of stories which soon found their way into the local newspapers. With the change in the mobility and the confidence of the blind there came a change, slow at first, in the attitude of the general public.

Progress before the Second World War was steady and encouraging, and in 1940 the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association converted a large house in Leamington Spa into a Residential Training Centre. This was followed ten years later by the opening of a similar Centre at Exeter, and in 1961 H.R.H. Princess Alexandra of Kent opened the third Centre at Bolton. For the first time Guide Dog training was carried out in a building specially designed for the purpose.

Each Centre is staffed with three or four fully qualified trainers and also apprentice trainers undergoing a three-year course of instruction. The guidance and supervision of all activities at each Centre is in the hands of a Controller, and financial matters and day-to-day administration are left to an experienced bursar,

whilst the Chief Controller, Secretary and Finance officers are at the central offices of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association in London.

The country is divided into large geographical areas, each with a salaried representative, who is a blind person with a Guide Dog. All the activities designed to collect money for the Association—for all the money needed is still found by voluntary contributions—are assisted and directed by the area representatives, who are in close touch with branch Organizing Committees which give time and energy to the improvement of conditions for blind people by raising funds. The cost of training and equipping a blind person with a dog is at present estimated at £250, so the financial aspect is important for all concerned.

Considered solely as the price of a dog £250 is certainly a lot of money, when the purchase price of a typical puppy would be somewhere in the region of £8 or £10. The premises occupied as Training Centres are bought or rented, and both the initial cost and the cost of maintenance, rates, fuel and light are quite high. Staffing with kennel maids, domestics, qualified trainers and permanent officers is also costly, whilst feeding and housing of dogs and blind students during training also come to an appreciable figure.

No blind person suitable for training is deprived of the opportunity of being provided with a Guide Dog merely because of his inability to make a minimum contribution. No means test is applied, and the wealth of a particular individual is no passport to priority of opportunity. The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association ask only for a donation from the blind person for his or

her dog, but accepts any sum that is offered. In practice, the offerings make no substantial inroad into the cost of training the dogs and for all intents and purposes £250 can be taken as an accurate guide to the burden the Association carries. No grants are received from official sources, and the continuation and future development of the work depends entirely on voluntary organization and effort.

Money is raised in many ways. Voluntary Committees arrange dances, socials, bring-and-buy sales, whist drives, suppers, darts and skittles competitions and a variety of outdoor events like garden fêtes, teas and summer fairs. Families provide a steady source of income by collecting silverfoil and milk-bottle tops. Hotels and inns generously place collecting boxes and an attractive glass pint tankard on their tables and bars. Children are fond of the Guide Dogs for the Blind "Shilling Fund". Those with a pet dog can privately collect from their relatives and friends until they have raised the £1 which entitles them to a special collar and medallion engraved with the name of their dog.

It is astonishing how the money collected mainly in these ways mounts. A recent annual income from the north of England totalled £35,000. By this kind of effort about 700 blind persons are now the proud owners of Guide Dogs in Britain, and the opening of a new Training Centre has been made possible. Great advances have been made in public support since the first dogs were trained in Cheshire in 1931. With a continuation of this kind of interest and personal effort the future for many blind persons is more hopeful than it has ever been.

Chapter Two

DOGS, BITCHES AND PEOPLE

When Dorothy Eustis witnessed the closeness of the union between dogs and human beings at Potsdam many questions ran through her mind. Among them was one which invariably arises at the sight of a new experience: Who thought of it? The interest of the Germans in training dogs was well known, but that their pioneering had advanced to such a stage must have come as a great surprise.

The story which attracted the attention of the Central German government concerned a doctor in a German Military Hospital in 1916, during the First World War. Casualties were typical of war: shell-shock, disfigurement and blindness were prominent among them. The young doctor had been talking to a soldier and, being called away for a few moments, left his dog with the wounded man. On his return he was impressed with the way in which the German Shepherd dog had been looking after the soldier and assisting him to move about. The doctor was shrewd enough to see some possible consequences. His dog was a pet and was not obedience trained; what if a dog were to be trained and a blinded soldier with it? It was enough to set the doctor off experimenting and he had some encouraging results.

From this association of a dog and two human beings there emerged a scheme to help blinded war veterans. The Germans were quick to appreciate that only working dogs would be suitable, and that they had to be highly teachable, two prerequisites that Mrs. Eustis would have accepted as fundamental. But for Mrs. Eustis there remained further questions about dogs and the blind of which she had no knowledge. What the Germans had achieved was important, but their approach and method was unlike that at Fortunate Fields and the Eustises and their friend, Elliot Humphrey, preferred to work out much of their own progress.

The first necessity is a choice of suitable dogs. Not all dogs are equally capable: indeed, some breeds are quite unsuitable on account of their weight and speed. A blind person and a dog working together at close quarters must maintain a balance and momentum which is acceptable to both; this debars some breeds, particularly the smaller ones, which cannot be in sympathetic contact with the owner's body weight and speed. The "feel" of such a dog would be missing, and balance would be unstable, and without correct balance a dog and a blind person would be incapable of turning and stopping in the harmony of movement which is vital.

A fairly large dog is needed, one with a minimum height of nineteen inches to its shoulders. In Great Britain the choices available were the German Shepherd dog (Alsatian), Boxer, Keeshond, Standard Poodle, Pointer, Dalmatian, Collie, Setter, Retriever, Afghan and Airedale.* The Alsatian was the link between the

* Crosses of these are occasionally found, usually gundog crosses, but more exceptional ones exist, including a Boxer crossed with a Labrador.

continent's years of experience and Britain, and was used by the trainers who successfully bridged the English Channel to begin the movement in Cheshire. For a time, the choice of the Alsatian as the British Guide Dog was predominant. Gradually, the breed began to lose its numerical superiority in favour of the working Collie and other varieties of sheepdog. A few Alsatians, particularly the males, had begun to show signs of aggressive tendencies towards other dogs with great disadvantages for Guide Dog work. No blind person could ever entirely rely on a guide which might become involved in a dog fight. The immediate remedy taken was a selection of more Alsatian bitches, as it was already known that a good Alsatian bitch was almost perfect for the work. Even so, it was discovered over the years that some bitches became over-protective as they aged, and this again was a risky "virtue" in a Guide Dog. Ageing also brought a minor complication for blind women, for some reports indicated that they had difficulty in controlling the strong and virile Alsatian as their own years began to advance.

To make up the deficiencies in the ranks of the Alsatians, experiments were carried out among other breeds, notably with Scotch, Welsh, and Border Collies, and a few Keeshonds, Retrievers, mostly Labrador Retrievers, and Boxers. The three varieties of Collie proved to be ideal in their quick response to training, and for a time it was believed that a good alternative had been found. But as time passed and the years rolled by, reports from blind owners began to show that a few of the dogs became over-excitable on occasions, particularly if confronted by a noise or sensation which was new to them.

These problems are scientific and are connected with the selection of dogs for a highly specialized job. "Fault" is a word with a strictly limited meaning when applied to dogs which have been selected for this special rôle. In most cases, the so-called "fault" is a particular virtue of the breed and may be one of the very qualities it relies upon to carry out the duties in the fields in which it has excelled.

Nobody would question the high intelligence and willingness of the Poodle,* or of the Dachshund, although the latter's size would rule it out as a Guide Dog. The Poodle is highly trainable, and like a disciplined soldier can be relied upon implicitly to obey orders. As a Guide Dog, it would go forward if told to do so and would stop only on command. Indeed, if the pavement were taken up during the night when blind owner and dog were asleep, leaving a gaping hole to obstruct dog and master's customary way to work, it is not inconceivable that the Poodle would try to jump to the other side.

The Dachshund is also a dog with a very advanced intelligence, but it is apt to think too much about its own desires. If it sensed its owner were unable to see, the clever Dachshund might utilize this for its own ends, as by walking close to shops on a wet day, where the pavement is drier than in the centre—the traditional line for Guide Dogs. These are "faults" in Guide Dogs, but not faults in the breeds themselves.

Since the Second World War two matters have become crystal clear in the selection of dogs: the suitability of the Labrador Retriever, discussed later, both

* This refers to the Standard Poodle, as it is called in Britain.

for training and during its post-training life; and the preference for bitches as opposed to dogs.

The preference for bitches may be surprising to the general public, as it can be too readily assumed that the male is more capable of a hard day's work, and is more eager to do it than the bitch, with her fondness for the fireside and home comforts. Many men, however, have a liking for a good bitch and she is just as eager for work. The Alsatian dog, whose over-typical masculinity caused an increased interest and research into the capabilities of bitches, is an understandable elimination, but this special case only partially explains a general preference for bitches instead of dogs.

All dog owners are painfully aware of the male dogs' irritating habit of stopping stubbornly at lamp-posts, trees, and street corners. The humorous aspect of this habit was typified in the pre-war film of *The Thin Man* in which the walks of Nick Carter and his amiable wife were continually halted by the insistent requirements of their wire-haired terrier, "Asta". But what is humorous on the screen is not always so in reality. In the post-war movement for better hygiene and sanitation it was open to the opponents of "harnessed" dogs to urge that their use would lower the standard of cleanness in public places. This was serious, but not so serious as the effect of the male dog's frequent stops on the safety of its owner.

These were serious problems which could hardly be shrugged off; these were, indeed, "faults" in male dogs which were hardly rectifiable, and even the ideal dog is incapable of controlling the demands of nature. The male dog seems to be quite fond of particular trees and

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lamp-posts, as he is with certain patches in the garden or on the lawn. There is something about them which mere human beings will never wholly fathom. They remain one of the partial mysteries of dogdom, although it is obvious that the male dog knows his own smell and prefers it to the distasteful one of a stranger. He dislikes, even hates, the idea of his patches being reconnoitred and approached, and is ready to defend them if called upon to do so. Clearly, a male Guide Dog would be rather at the mercy of this instinct whenever he was on duty and it would be miraculous, to say the least, if he were never to go close to the patches of other dogs, whether in the proximity of his own neighbourhood, or far away from home visiting relatives. The Guide Dog and its owner are frequently near enough to trees, street corners, post-boxes, telegraph posts, gate-posts and all the other regalia collectively termed "lamp-posts" to make it certain that they will sooner or later be leaped upon or snapped at by a furiously enraged dog. A Guide Dog is not easily goaded, but it is possible that it would defend itself and retaliate, or, to say the least, it might be shocked or startled by a sudden attack, when it was busily carrying out its duties. It might begin to look out for other dogs in order to defend itself, or even be the first to take action, but the end would be the same. The Guide Dog would be ruined by a development of aggressive tendencies towards other dogs, which would cause it to be a nuisance and source of danger to its blind owner, and a dog whose strict attention to work would never be relied on again.

When the Guide Dog is female, as is now nearly always the case, there is so little likelihood of mishaps

Plate 5. Teaching "Stay" from the "Down" position. The girl assistant uses voice and hand as she withdraws. The leash is held ready.

Plate 6. A trainee is encouraged to "Stay" in the "Sit" position. The distance is only a few yards at first "Good girl!"

Plate 7. The qualified trainer takes over the training. He walks a new charge in the streets to assess her confidence and capabilities. "Sit" at the kerb, showing the position of dog and trainer's feet. Right foot ready to go down on the road.

Plate 8. "Forward"—the dog is down a few seconds before the trainer's right foot has moved into the road.

of this kind that, for all intents and purposes, they can be disregarded. The habits of the bitch, and the attitude of the male if a bitch is near his "lamp-post", are entirely different. The bitch does not seek "lamp-posts" when away from her own backyard or garden, and her concentration is consequently more dependable than the male Guide Dog. The attitude of the strange male dog to her is also of a different character. Even when she approaches his treasured "lamp-post" he is rarely, if ever, aggressive. He may go up to her and look her over in a casual way, but his attention is regarded as a compliment, and she pays but scant notice to his gentlemanly sniffs.

It is clear that the greatest skill and care is exercised in choosing dogs as guides for human beings. What of the blind themselves? There are about 100,000 blind persons in Britain, to whom blindness may have come at birth or at any later time. Apart from children and old people all are in theory possible candidates for a dog. Children are excluded because the fully grown trained dog is too big for them to control. Equally, to allocate one to persons who have been blind a long time, and who are well advanced in years before they lose their sight, may involve considerable risk as to their fitness. Finally, a few blind people have no wish for a Guide Dog, either because they do not like dogs, or are unable to accept a degree of dependence on a dumb animal. The cost of careful and scientific training of a dog can be wasted by wrong allocation, and an opportunity denied to another blind person who might have had the dog.

The remaining problem is entirely a matter of

finance. There is no difficulty in finding an adequate supply of suitable dogs, and with more funds available for premises, qualified staff and equipment, there is little doubt that the numbers of trained dogs could be increased.

The three Training Centres can produce about 240 fully trained dogs each year, but, this, unfortunately, does not mean providing dogs for 240 fresh blind persons. The average working life of a Guide Dog is about nine years, for some of a dog's faculties usually begin to be affected, or a slowing of its reactions begins to show, between the ages of eight and twelve. The dog is then retired from its life of service, often spending the rest of its days as a pet of the blind owner it has so faithfully served. The blind person who has lost his guide is a first priority for a replacement, and the replacement figure totals about half the national output. Of course, the replacement dog does not simply arrive one morning in a delivery van, fully trained and ready to begin work; as each dog is an individual with its own temperament, physical characteristics and outlook, the blind person has to report back to a Training Centre to be re-trained with a dog which is thought to be the right one for him.

The Training Centres are, therefore, occupied with a large replacement and re-training programme amounting to roughly half the work devoted to equipping blind applicants with their first dogs. Only money will help to increase the flow of trained dogs so that their numbers will have an appreciable effect on the long waiting list. Each Training Centre usually has about 100 people waiting to be called forward for train-

ing, and there will always come the day when they will require a replacement dog.

Observations about Guide Dogs cannot be complete without some explanation of the suitability of the dog as a species for the duties it is called upon to undertake. Few animals have lived for so long in such a close relationship with men and women, sharing their work, their homes, and their leisure. There is no other domesticated animal able to provide certain of its species which are roughly the right size for balance in movement.

The speed of a dog's movement is also a most important factor in its suitability for the work. The Guide Dog's walk is slightly faster than that of the average man and woman; it is also more consistent and regular, for men and women are accustomed to vary their pace according to their moods. There should, however, be no strain on a person who is in good condition and not too advanced in years.

It is fortunate indeed that the dog, man's friend, is at hand in such a readily available supply. It is even more fortunate that his physical characteristics are such that the necessary basis exists for his pairing with human beings, and that his mental and emotional make-up can combine, with expert handling, to train him to carry out great responsibilities on behalf of persons who are unable to see. The story of this process usually begins in puppyhood and ends only when a life of service with a blind person has come to its inevitable conclusion.

Chapter Three

SELECTING THE PUPPIES AND PREPARATORY TRAINING

FEW people can resist puppies. From childhood to old age, puppy ways please young and old alike. Children love to read books which tell stories of the antics and exploits of puppies, and as they grow up they still like to choose Birthday and Christmas cards with characteristic poses stamped on the covers.

People select their puppies for a variety of reasons. Women are often influenced by the dictates of fashion, which appears to play nearly as big a part in their choice of dogs as in matters of dress and hair styles. Women's glossy magazines, purchases by royalty, and the possessions of film stars, actresses, and other notable persons, have in turn affected the popularity of breeds. The Corgis owned by the British Royal family had a great deal to do with the rise in favour of these little dogs, and the interest shown by film stars and actresses in small breeds greatly assisted the growth in the numbers of Pekinese and Miniature Poodles. The outdoor man looks for a gun dog and men in general prefer the larger breeds; the shooting enthusiast is fond of puppies with a working background and sometimes settles for a first cross of breeds which possess a working history.

People who live alone, or who own large premises from which they desire to discourage prowlers, generally require a strong dog with an aggressive air.

Even when a breed is in vogue there are often special preferences for a particular colour. Cocker Spaniels, popular for so many years after the end of the war, provide a wide range of choice with roans of all types, parti-colours, blacks, reds, and goldens, but the latter eventually dominated the polls as the favourite. Sometimes a fashion of this kind burns itself out and then a swing takes place towards a rarer colour of the same breed. The smallest puppies in the litter, and not always the most robust, are likely to arouse a sentimental attitude to selection, and they are carried in triumph from the kennel to the shelter of an adoring home.

Future Guide Dogs are selected solely for the purpose of being able to carry out their duties to blind people and no other considerations are practicable. Experience has shown the way to a firm basis of principles which guarantee most successes. The Labrador Retriever is now the most favoured breed, but puppies are chosen only from certain strains or blood lines within this breed. Other strains which have not produced consistent results are avoided.

The puppies are chosen by a Reception Kennel Manager who is responsible for their rearing and supervision in all the stages of puppyhood. As he knows exactly what he wants and where to look there is no possibility of a shortage of supply, with the possible exception of two months in each year, January and February. The reason for this is well known to breeders of dogs. Few people relish the responsibilities of puppy

rearing in the two coldest months, and buyers are usually reluctant to contemplate a purchase until the welcoming signs of spring come along. There may be an occasional inquiry for a puppy to replace the sudden and unexpected loss of an old friend, but such inquiries are rare and do not warrant the rearing of a litter under wintry conditions.

The selected puppies are nearly all acquired by outright purchase, but gifts are not unknown. The boldest and friendliest specimens from those strains known to produce consistently good results are taken from their kennels and homes when they are between eight and ten weeks old, which is the customary age for the disposal of a litter, and are transferred to one of the Training Centres where they are housed in modern kennels. Their stay is only a short one, merely a few days, and it is used to look them over carefully and see that they are inoculated against the prevailing virus diseases, and to be issued with the necessary veterinary certificates giving the details and dates of the protections they have received. "To look them over carefully" is perhaps an under-statement where these puppies are concerned. They actually go through a series of tests which are designed to give the Controller of the Training Centre his first picture of the individual characteristics of each future Guide Dog.

Animals are not machines, and not even the consistent success of the boldest and friendliest puppies of the favoured strains guarantees that each puppy will ultimately qualify as a Guide Dog. No chances are taken, and a most painstaking watch begins on the habits and development of each puppy as soon as it arrives at the

Training Centre. Not all make the grade and withdrawals are sometimes necessary, even at times involving a quarter of the original purchases.

Tests can be conveniently divided into two categories —general and specific. The general tests are those which all prospective puppy owners would do well to consider, for they are as necessary for all dogs as they are for future Guide Dogs. Physical fitness can be a trite phrase unless there is a real understanding of what it means, but in a puppy it is essential for a normal and healthy development to maturity. Future Guide Dogs must be completely fit, and good ribs, sound limbs, heart room, no trace of bad breath or weeping eyes, alertness and a sound general appearance are essential. There should be no sign of rickets. Rickets indicates bad rearing, worms, or a deficiency of calcium in the body, and is immediately manifest in enlarged joints and deformed legs, often bending inwards as though the weight of the body is too much. If rickets is advanced the puppy may double up and give in the front legs. The puppies should also be entirely free from nerves, suspicion, and shyness. They should enjoy the friendly and open temperament which was so attractive a feature of their parentage and pedigree.

The other tests are specifically for the duties the puppies will need to carry out in their future careers as Guide Dogs. It must be emphasized, however, that although puppies sometimes fail part of the tests, it is in no way to be taken as any kind of reflection on the breeder, the breed, or indeed on the puppy itself. The specific tests carried out measure the reactions of each puppy for a special vocation, and for any other purpose

any deviations from the high standard required would be of no account, or might even be regarded as desirable. But puppies which are to assume special duties must attain a high standard and their reactions need to be most carefully recorded.

THE SPECIFIC TESTS

The puppies must not show aggressive tendencies of any kind. Their attitude to people will at this stage be quite obvious and will be demonstrated daily to kennel maids and trainers. Indeed, they would not have been removed from their litters unless they had been above reproach on this score. In the same way their attitude to other puppies, nearly all of them strangers from different kennels and different litters, will also have been recorded, but as yet there is no knowledge of their reaction to the traditional enemy of the canine species —the cat. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to introduce each puppy to "pussy" and watch the results.

No future Guide Dog must show the slightest sign of aggressiveness towards cats, and one unable to resist the temptation would be withdrawn. Not only would it be a nuisance in streets, public places, and in the home where the dog might live with its blind owner—in which cats are not uncommon—but its single-minded concentration to its duty would be seriously affected. There would have to be no risk of a dog darting at a cat in the busy streets of towns and cities, particularly as it might lead to a dog crossing a road to get to grips with or to chase its foe.

The puppies are tested for their reactions to touch,

officially known as Body Sensitivity. Body Sensitivity is extreme in some dogs and they only have to be patted or flicked lightly on the back or sides to cause them to start noticeably, or even to move or leap aside. Other dogs are completely unmoved by such actions and pay no attention, until one comes to the conclusion that their skins are as thick as hides. In future Guide Dogs there should be a reaction, but it should be moderate with no trace of either of these extremes. A sudden or violent reaction would be just as serious as none at all. When working, a Guide Dog should show no surprise or fright when touched or brushed by strangers and pedestrians, nor should bodily contact be met with complete unawareness, otherwise it is certain that a mishap of one kind or another will come the way of its owner. If a dog did bump into a pedestrian or a pillar-box without caring very much, it is likely that the unfortunate owner would have a collision. If, on the other hand, the dog was frightened by something touching it, then it might leap aside, causing the blind owner a fall or an accident. Guide Dogs should behave as most normal people do in their day-to-day duties, when they occasionally brush against other people and material objects.

The hearing of all Guide Dogs must be first class. It is, however, not enough that its hearing mechanism is perfect and that there is no suspicion of deafness, however slight; the puppies are tested additionally for Hearing Sensitivity, which is another way of saying that their attitude to noises of all kinds must be scientifically observed. Once again the reaction should be moderate without extremes. Some dogs are suspicious or

frightened by all kinds of noises—motor-cycles, cars, hooters, aeroplanes, falling shutters, whirring machines, railway trains, telephones, and all the incredible variations of sound which civilization has brought. It is hardly surprising that some of these noises astonish and worry dogs, for they are by no means alone in this, but a Guide Dog must under no circumstances react violently away from them. Other dogs might remain unmoved if a fire engine screamed down the road with sirens or bells going, or if a sudden explosion blew up the mains outside their front door. Such praiseworthy stoicism would be considered as too little reaction for a Guide Dog. A dog of this kind would pay no attention at all to fast-moving traffic and especially to those vehicles which make comparatively little sound as they approach, like bicycles and scooters. The reaction of each puppy's hearing should be moderate in the sense that it realizes that a noise has been made, but is neither oblivious to it nor frightened by it.

The dog's hearing has been the object of a certain amount of research since the turn of the century, and it has revealed that there are great differences between the hearing of dogs and of human beings. It is important to discuss some of the more important contrasts in order to distinguish them from reactions from the normal. A dog which barks or becomes excited, ears on the alert, when its owner cannot hear any noise to warrant the reaction, may in fact be receiving sounds. Man is able to hear vibrations as high (or rapid) as 50,000 per second, but his dog can hear beyond this, up to as high as 80,000 or even 90,000 vibrations per second. No dog can, therefore, be held to have an over-violent reaction

to a sound a man cannot assess for himself; only if the sound and its cause are known can a reaction be noted and determined.

The keenness of the dog's hearing is also much more acute than a human being's. This means that a dog can distinguish the quality of sounds that a man might believe are the same. For example, a dog's reaction to footsteps may be quite different if they belong to a stranger on the one hand, or to its owner on the other. The one may arouse in him suspicion and displeasure and in the other a rush to the door with a happily wagging tail. Wives are often able to say to their husbands, "I knew it was you, because Sally heard you coming up the drive!" "Sally" is nearly always right. This sensitivity to quality of sound will often mean that some dogs will pay scant attention to tradesmen, whilst others will bark because they just do not like strange footsteps. The reactions of breeds differ, as well as the reactions of different dogs in the same breed but, in general, the sounds of footsteps up the drive to a house are often heard by a dog before the knock on the door, usually the first indication to the owner of the house that somebody has arrived.

The quality of sound is vital in a trained dog or a dog undergoing training. The trainee and fully-trained dog will obey the commands and signals of its owner and yet may not do so for a stranger because the sound is not the same to its ears. It is unreasonable to teach a dog to do something and then expect it to repeat it for a casual acquaintance.

Guide Dog puppies which satisfy the requirements of the testing embark on a brief but happy episode in their

lives when they are about three months old. There is nothing positive to be gained by keeping them at the Training Centre and everything to be gained by placing them in temporary homes within a reasonable distance of supervision. A scheme has been introduced therefore, still in many ways experimental, which is planned to give each puppy the individual attention which it could not possibly be given at the Centre where so many puppies would be gathered together, and where so many other aspects of training have to be carried out. Individual attention is the light in which a puppy develops and blossoms towards maturity. Dog breeders are well aware, that, however much attention and care they shower on puppies, there appears to be some special magic at work when they go into a home where the correct principles of puppy rearing are known. The Guide Dog puppies are consequently placed in carefully-selected homes whose owners are constantly advised on all stages of puppy development and care. These people are known as Puppy Walkers, and their invaluable help in the building up of a future Guide Dog is called Puppy Walking.

Puppy Walking has another vital function to play. It is the aim of everybody who is concerned about the welfare of the blind to see that no blind person is denied the psychological and social advantage of being able to earn a living. This implies that the work should be real and important, and not merely a therapeutic occupation designed to relieve boredom or despair. Real jobs of any consequence, other than agriculture, are performed in the large towns and cities in which the vast majority of people are actually employed. The puppies,

after completion of training, will take their blind owners to work and will be living close to the office or factory where their masters or mistresses will need to go each morning. Puppies which have been brought up under conditions similar to those which they will later find in and around their homes will obviously adapt themselves more quickly and more naturally than those which have not. It would be inadvisable, however pleasant, to bring up puppies in the country and then transfer them later to town and city life. Puppies brought up in the countryside often develop a dislike of traffic, of noise, and of crowds, even though their ancestors had no trace of it. When puppies are transferred from isolated country retreats to towns, suspicions like these are by no means uncommon, so that it is logical and sensible for future Guide Dogs to grow up naturally in surroundings where the noise and liveliness of urban life is accepted as commonplace.

The Puppy Walkers usually live in homes where the activities of modern life are found in all their forms; where cars, buses and trains take the members of families to work; where children run, walk and cycle to school each day; where telephones, wireless sets and televisions make their familiar noises; where mother goes off to do her shopping and tradespeople call; and where the family tears away from it all in a motor car at the week-end.

In this atmosphere of town life the future Guide Dog puppies grow and develop, learning to accept the noises and the comings and goings as part of their everyday pattern of things. Their kindly Walkers are always in touch with the nearby Training Centre whose interest

in their charges is recorded on a wall chart kept at "Operational Headquarters" like the Combined Operations of the last war. The Puppy Walkers are assisted financially by the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association towards the general upkeep and feeding of the growing dogs, and general insurance and veterinary attention are also provided for. Each puppy wears a special bronze medallion bearing the imprint of the Association, and this serves the same purpose as all the other medallions worn by pet puppies the world over—a safe return to its owner in the event of its straying for any length of time.

Sceptics would probably argue that all this fuss and attention is likely to spoil a puppy. A family, possibly with children, which receives an attractive young dog which they are not called upon to train, will, in the sceptics' judgment, take it so much to their heart that it is likely to be allowed to do almost as it wishes. Perhaps, the sceptics might say, the fact that it goes back to the Centre for special training further encourages this lack of responsibility, particularly as an ordinary family would hardly know enough to help adequately in the future development of such a specialist task. "Let them train it as know how to," would be the normal philosophy of such a doubter, and on the face of it, it is not as unreasonable as it sounds. Everybody loves a puppy, and the sentimental attachment to a Guide Dog puppy would tax the resources of the strictest disciplinarian.

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association takes a few measures which appear to minimize the effects of these ordinary human weaknesses and shortcomings. Puppy

Walkers are, first and foremost, playing an active part in blind welfare. Their acceptance of a puppy is far removed from the idea of a few months of a nice puppy on loan for the children without any responsibilities—they are reminded, if they need to be, that their offer is going to do a good turn for a person considerably less fortunate than themselves. The kind of people who wish to associate themselves with such a sentiment are usually aware that the puppy is being trained for somebody else's benefit, not their own, and that they have an obligation to that "blind somebody" to do their best in its upbringing. They know that the puppy will have to leave them after a relatively short time, and as parents realize the gap in the household that arises when young things grow up or go away from home, they consequently understand the disappointment their children will feel when a dearly loved animal has to go away. People like this do not take a puppy temporarily for fun.

The possibility of spoiling the puppy is remote. Each Puppy Walker is provided with a special booklet which is a recipe for successful Puppy Walking. In it those points which have real significance for the puppy's future duties to a blind person are singled out for strict attention, and the booklet also emphasizes and discusses the general care, diet and grooming necessary. The matters to which the temporary owners are asked to pay particular attention, or rather, which they should watch and carry out *in addition* to the general care of the puppy, begin with sensible house-training.

Most owners of dogs refer to house-training as making sure that the regular habits of the calls of nature take place somewhere outdoors, ideally on one's own

land or on a waste piece of ground where no public nuisance is involved. This is basic and essential, but the house-training of a Guide Dog puppy extends to the gentle insistence on habits which are required of a good and civilized companion of the home, as for blind owners they are to become home companions in the broadest sense. Such young things may need some discouragement from displays of the kind of exuberance which go beyond the bounds of the good spirits and pranks which all puppies are allowed, and which would be a source of embarrassment to blind persons who will be united socially and domestically to the dogs with which they will share life itself. Chewing an old slipper is one thing, but biting off the legs of chairs is another. Jumping over the outside bird bath may be very good exercise, but similar displays of energy across the dining-room table will not be welcomed. Barking at strangers is a favourite pastime of many dogs, but too much of it may easily cause difficulties for some blind persons, who will need to rely on their dogs to lead them to doors or gates to allow friends and strangers in.

Puppy Walkers are informed of the supreme importance of a leash for their puppies. A leash is an obvious "must" for *all* puppies. No dog is safe in town or city, which is not subject to this form of protection and control, whether it is a fully-trained dog or merely a pet: the risks are the same for all dogs. The leash is important enough in itself, but it is also a vital symbol in the minds of future Guide Dogs and a puppy must take the leash seriously at all times. It is not a thing with which a puppy should be teased, nor should it be made the object of a game; rather should the puppy be impressed

THE WHITE HARNESS

with the fact that there is something special about the leash and that when it is on, the attitude of its owner is serious and concentrated. In this and other ways a puppy develops a sense of awareness that wearing the leash means that it is on its mettle, and that in some way it is at work, a feeling that is assisted by the working history of its forebears.

This implies that the puppy should be on its leash whenever it is taken out for walks, although at play times outdoors in the fields and parks it can scamper about to its heart's content. If a particular puppy is a live wire, then a mad few minutes somewhere helps it to settle down before its walk on the leash.

A Guide Dog and its owner walk, as far as possible, in the centre of pavements so that there is plenty of room for manœuvre and no serious risk of being pushed too near the edge. This position also assists them to arrive at a good central position at road junctions. The young puppy's walks should, therefore, be taken in the same way. The adult dog also walks on the left side of the normal right-handed master, so that he is free to use his hand whenever he wants to. The young bitch has to be accustomed to this rather unusual place as she is carefully introduced to all the sounds which invade the highways and pavements of urban life.

Firstly, she should feel happy just walking on the leash in side streets of suburbs well away from the violent commotions of the town centre. Here, she can be talked to and encouraged if she does not like a particular noise, so that she will be gaining confidence in readiness for the following weeks when she will be taken into her first shops, preferably small and friendly ones.

Secondly, she should be encouraged to walk and move near to children. Children will be a common feature in the towns and cities through which she will travel in future life, and she must adjust herself to their sudden movements and irregular behaviour.

Finally, she should differentiate between work and play, and no confusion should exist in her mind as to where one begins and the other ends. Puppies, like children, cannot grow into really mature and intelligent adults unless they know where they stand. They should always be reprimanded if they are naughty or do something which is wrong. Reprimands to puppies should be given by the voice, as dogs react sharply to the tone and manner of how things are said—in the case of dogs, words generally speak louder than actions. Praise should be generous and should sound overwhelmingly doting to the dog, and can be emphasized by gentleness of manner and a complimentary caress. Disapproval should be unmistakable, conveyed by an entirely different, and stern, tone of voice. "Good Girl" and "Naughty Girl" are the appropriate words of encouragement and reprimand.

Blind people will, in any case, be largely dependent on the voice for the control of their dogs and will have reason to talk to them more than the average owner. A liberal use of conversation by the Puppy Walker prepares the way for the bitch later on. Education in the quality and meaning of the voice helps to smooth her journey.

When the puppy has settled down happily and comfortably in her new home and is moving around well on the leash, she is ready to begin a few basic obedience

exercises. Before a start is made, it is as well to make absolutely certain that there are no town noises, shop noises, or any other distractions indoors and outdoors which she has not accepted. Other dogs, for example, need careful watching. A romp and a scamper with friends is a fine thing in the fields during playtime, but when she is on the leash, too much attention to other dogs is a bad fault and should be discouraged. If a puppy persisted it might even prove incurable, and so would have to be withdrawn from further training.

The exercises can be given near home, but, if possible, attendance at a Dog Training Club is invaluable experience in providing contact with other people and other dogs. The puppies begin their early training by learning to obey certain basic commands.

"Sit" and *"Down"*

All the exercises are essential preparations for future duties as a guide for blind men and women. The puppy must sit or lie down immediately she hears the order. All orders to dogs should be short, clear and readily understandable, and should be entirely divorced from the kind of small talk which goes on in the family circle when she is off duty. She is now on duty and all commands should emphasize this. Patience is, of course, a prime virtue in all aspects of her early training, and all her efforts to try and do her best should be received with boundless praise. A shower of praise for an honest effort is far more encouraging to a puppy than anything else.

Guide Dogs always stop and sit when they come to a kerb. They sit squarely on their hind quarters and reach the position by drawing their hind quarters to their front

legs, and not vice versa as other dogs do. Puppy Walkers can teach this on their own premises until the puppy has mastered it. The suggested approach, remembering that the puppy is on the left side, is to transfer the leash over to the right hand and gently position the trainee with the left. The command "Sit" is given just before the left hand touches the puppy. The hand is kept there for a few seconds to make certain she is not thinking of getting up again, and is released when the Puppy Walker wants her to do so.

This must be done regularly, with encouragement and praise, until the lesson has been fully digested. When the results are good the puppy can start to learn "Down". The command "Down" can be given when she is sitting. The leash is held close to the collar with the right hand and the left hand applies pressure on the shoulders; this time the right hand can assist by being lowered as well. The puppy is kept in position by the left hand and kept happy by stroking.

"Stay" and *"Come"*

How many dog owners have occasion to wish that their pets would stay immobile for them? Only when a puppy has mastered "Sit" and "Down" can the stage be set for a logical extension of its obedience training. Too many lessons and very long lessons are bad, as the puppy, like a child, builds up confidence and knowledge like building bricks or stacking cards, only having enough confidence to place another on to the pile when the foundation is solid. The principle to follow is the one of "easy stages".

When the puppy is sitting, the command "Stay" is

given by standing in front of it and then slowly retiring a few paces, but always facing the puppy with leash in hand. The action is similar to a fisherman letting out his line with great care, but in reverse, as in this case the holder of the leash is the moving body. If the puppy tries to follow, and it may well want to, then the Walker is advised to place it back gently in its position. This may be necessary quite a few times, but praise and patience will soon pave the way to success. "Stay" can now be extended to the "Down" position.

"Come" is done only too readily when a puppy is lying down or sitting, and the Puppy Walker will probably find this by far the easiest lesson. Most puppies will go readily to master or mistress when they coax it with voice and hand.

Titbits are not allowed in training, and there is no question of a puppy being enticed to its owner with some delicacy or other. Titbits are not included in any of the different branches of a dog's training, not only because they are not good for a correctly fed animal, but also because a dog which might or might not respond to voice alone, could prove disastrous for a blind master. It would be impracticable in the extreme to encourage a Guide Dog's habits in this way. A Guide Dog which is unwilling to work cheerfully would not be the type to succeed, for an unhappy dog is like an unhappy person—not a particularly willing worker. Genuine service is not built on these shifting rocks.

In all these matters the Puppy Walker is encouraged and advised by the staff of the Training Centre who visit the home every month. Usually all goes well, and at about ten months the day arrives for the parting

which the persons concerned with her preparation knew was inevitable. Often with sadness and a sense of deep loss the Puppy Walker hands over the larger and wiser young bitch, still officially "puppy" until she is a year old, to the Training Centre from which she was received. Careful selection, years of experience, and the happy co-operation which exists between the Centres and Puppy Walkers have reduced the percentage of rejections to a minimum. Even so, a few, very few, puppies sometimes develop in a way which their original selection and testing did not, and perhaps could not show, and fail (if fail is the right word for a puppy which is unable to continue for one reason or another) to reach the standard a future Guide Dog ought to possess.

What happens to the few? Perhaps there is joy for the Puppy Walker and puppy alike as a permanent rather than a temporary home is found. The Training Centres have many local inhabitants of the area anxious to be favoured with a rejection. Whatever the outcome, the occasion is a happy one for somebody, the blind person soon to acquire a pair of eyes and a friend, or a happy and proud sighted new owner.

Chapter Four

TRAINING THE DOGS

All future Guide Dogs go through an intensive course of special training at one of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association's Training Centres. The course is planned to cover a period of three months from the time a dog is considered ready to begin until she has completed the schedule planned to make her fit to meet her prospective blind owner. The training is strictly practical, and theory enters in only when it has proved its value in increasing the dog's efficiency. The course rests, therefore, on what a Guide Dog will normally be expected to do and how best she can be educated to do it.

Routine needs of the blind are no different from those of sighted people: going to and from work; doing errands; making business calls; occasionally paying visits to friends; posting letters; going to the doctor's; visiting large stores; travelling by bus and train. Blind persons and Guide Dogs find that their lives are taken up with these essential excursions, and it is around them that the basic training of the dogs is built.

Not all the recruits at the Training Centres arrive there through the Puppy Walking Scheme. Offers are

continually received by the Controllers from people who wish to send adult dogs for training. Although their letters are read with interest, such offers cannot be accepted at once. Careful investigations have to be made before an adult dog can be called forward. It may be that a dog has had a recent illness, perhaps with a serious virus disease like hardpad or hepatitis, which could make it a possible source of danger to the valuable stock already on the premises. Some of the dogs so generously offered may well be too old for so rigorous a course and would be physically and mentally incapable of qualifying. Only those between one and two years of age are considered trainable as future Guide Dogs. Again, some adults may have temperamental characteristics which would be undesirable, like shyness of people and children, or fear of vehicles and sudden noises. Travel sickness is occasionally present in animals, and it would be a disappointing blow to accept a dog only to find this out after her arrival at the Training Centre. Travel sickness would obviously rule out any further consideration, as a dog made ill in cars, trains and buses, would be useless to a blind person who relies on his guide to take him about.

Not even these points are the end of the inquiries which will need to be made before any adult dogs are considered fit to be trained. It is imperative to discover if the dogs have acquired any faults which may be difficult to correct. Elimination of faults in selected puppies is one thing, but those which have developed in unselected ones may be quite a different proposition. What if they disliked other dogs? What if they had not been trained to walk on leads?

The Training Centres receive offers which at times run into many hundreds, but the replies to a questionnaire which is sent out usually end in about one in every four of the dogs offered being promising enough to call forward for a careful testing period. It may be as long as three weeks before a definite decision is made about final acceptance for training. Even then, an adult dog will not be ready to go straight into the schedule of the three months' progressive education which constitutes the training period proper. Walking on the lead will need to be watched, and the basic business of preliminary obedience will have to be introduced. Some dogs will learn more quickly than others, of course, and to bring the dogs to the stage reached by the selected puppies, individual tuition is often necessary.

A few words should be said about the three months' period of training. It must not be thought that all dogs take this length of time to cover the full training. Dogs, like children, have different speeds of learning, and it may well take some of them a few weeks longer than others before they will have finished all their lessons to the complete satisfaction of their trainers.

What of the selected puppies now back at the Centres? They should likewise not be regarded as a batch of youngsters arriving at the gates on the same day, or in the same week, wakening one morning to begin full training. They arrive at different times and at different ages. Some puppies, or young dogs as they now are, mature at a faster rate than others. Maturity is a question of mental development as well as physical. Only experience in assessing the stage of young dogs' mental and physical progress provides an indication of the right

time to commit them to their further education. Some revision, too, is advisable before this final step is made. They need to go through a "polishing up" process of the basic obedience work they learnt with the Puppy Walkers, a task which is undertaken by girl training assistants, who make absolutely certain that they can walk confidently on the lead and don't pull, and that they do, in fact, "Stop" and "Stay" when they are told.

All the recruits, by whatever route they arrive at the Training Centre, must "Sit" when requested, and in the correct squatting position with the hind quarters drawn up to the front legs. This position is painstakingly scrutinized so that the consistency of their movements and their positions are seen to be regular.

Many of these revisionary and preliminary preparations are carried out in the grounds of the Training Centres and in the quieter areas nearby, and normally take about two weeks to complete. It is then generally considered that all the future hopefuls are confident and skilled and ready to proceed into the more serious business ahead.

The next stage in the dog's education, and the real beginning of its scheduled training (though it is, of course, true that preparation and training are a continuous process), is undertaken by the training assistants. They coax their charges in the way to sense their desire to turn "Left", "Right", or to retrace their steps and go back. These desires are conveyed to the dogs in as natural a way as possible. An intelligent and well-trained dog will normally follow a trainer's change of direction when they are both on the move, and the Guide Dog trainees are no exception in this. Guide

Dogs, however, should be thoroughly used to changes of direction when they reach a kerb where, of course, they always stop. From a kerb there is the choice of going on ahead, or of turning left, or right, or going back from where they have come. The kerb position consequently provides a great opportunity both to practise turns to given orders, and to impress the orders and turns into the dog's memory. With practice and encouragement, the girl assistants begin to develop an ease of movement and confidence which is an essential foundation for all future lessons. At this time, the dog still regards herself as a single unit being walked around by a human being, but as the training process develops and the weeks pass, a new realization that in some way she and her human friend are connected and merging begins to dawn in the dog's mind.

When all the dogs in training are slick and competent at changing direction, both during movement and from the static position, it is time for them to be introduced to the white harnesses. All the training so far completed has been carried out on the leash to which they are fully accustomed. The process of transfer from leash to harness is one of particular importance and delicacy, and marks the completion of all the preliminary training prior to the introduction of more specialized responsibilities. So vital are the introduction of the harness to the dogs and their acceptance of it, that the Training Centres sometimes refer to it as "Operation Danger". It may, in certain cases, take as long as a fortnight before it is completed.

Although Guide Dogs work in their white harnesses the long leash is not entirely dispensed with. It is kept on

in case of an emergency; if, for instance, the blind person should lose a grip on the white harness. The harness is made of leather and has a detachable metal handle which is leather encased. The handle is relatively short, being only about eighteen inches long. This shortness is a factor in the working unit of dog and blind, as it is the closeness of the human to the dog which helps to unite them in balance and a sense of oneness. The dogs must obviously feel at home in their harnesses with the rather heavy handles attached. There should be no trace of anxiety or dislike of either one or the other.

The first step in the important operation is to give the young dogs every confidence in moving around in harnesses alone. For this step the harnesses are used with the long leashes, which are familiar to the dogs and assist them in accepting the new sensations. Very rarely does this cause any bother, and, even if a few dogs felt strange and tried to shake off their harnesses, the long leashes allow enough freedom for any display of tantrums. As the dogs become confident the leashes are shortened to the length of the metal handle, so that they become acquainted with both the white harnesses and the closeness of the trainer. One or two dogs may be rather conscious of this restricted area of movement and need to be walked for a longer period than the rest, but most recruits accept the changes with obvious pleasure, and are prepared to accept the introduction of the real handles without any fuss. Now and again a few are suspicious of the difference and are aware that the feel of the metal handle is not the same as the leash and for these dogs soft harnesses are available. Made wholly of leather and capable of expansion, they can be

used as a kind of connecting bridge. The suspicious ones accept them readily and, after a few days of walking easily around in them, proceed to the proper handles as if they were now unaware of any change. These final acceptances bring the operation to an end. The dogs are now all correctly dressed, are obedient to basic commands, and are able to walk around smoothly without pulling.

The time has come for the girl assistants to hand over their responsibilities to the fully-qualified trainer, who is a man, usually young, and devoted to his task and responsibility. In the main his job is to educate the dog to negotiate obstacles and become accustomed to the hazards of modern traffic.

"Obstacle" is a word which has different meanings for different people. Those with experience in H.M. Forces may immediately think in terms of barbed wire, minefields, high walls and rivers. To others the word will take their minds back to their school-days. The Obstacle Race is always one of the highlights of sports days. As far as blind persons are concerned an obstacle is a natural or material thing which he cannot see and which lies in his path. It must be directly in his path because the Guide Dogs are trained and encouraged to walk straight from one point to the next, which, in built-up areas means they are usually walking on pavements from one kerb edge to the next until there is a change of direction. There are various kinds of obstacles in the way of this unhindered walk: for example, the presence of other people going about their day-to-day business; ladders, pillar-boxes, crates, the equipment left around by workmen, and trenches and holes when

pavements are taken up for repairs. Natural obstacles are found more often, of course, in the countryside where there are not usually pavements, and a blind person and dog will be committed to tracks, lanes, and sometimes just fields and the open countryside. The most frequent kinds of obstacles to bar their paths will be trees, shrubs, bushes, gates, streams and hedges. Without a trained guide they would be confusing and formidable obstacles indeed.

The problem which faces the qualified trainer is not that the dog will be stupid enough to walk into a fire-hydrant or a pillar-box, but that she will go around it without allowing a blind person enough room to pass. If a dog were just to go around the obstacle haphazardly the unfortunate owner would meet the obstacle head on. If it turned out to be a ladder or a low arch in the narrow passages which are common in some of our ancient towns, he would be more than likely to get a painful blow on the head.

So the trainer starts by making use of any normal obstacle he can find in the grounds of the Training Centre. He may, for example, decide to use a post. Walking the dog around the grounds he eventually takes her up in the direction of the obstacle. As she is a normal and intelligent dog she avoids the post and starts to go around it but, of course, as this is her first experience of such things, she does not allow sufficient room for the trainer. He, knowing that this will probably happen, raps sharply on the post and says "No", and at the same time pushes the dog aside. This drill is repeated frequently until the recruit associates the sound and the trainer's "No" and push with his desire to have some

room. She then begins to please him and does it automatically.

A similar routine is adopted for those obstacles which may be overhead, such as clothes lines and low archways. The trainer again makes use of existing facilities in the grounds of the Centre, perhaps the low branch of a big tree. The dog is walked around and is eventually guided towards the offending obstacle. The only variation now is that the trainer slows her down just before he raps on the branch. But as she has already heard "No", she is not slow to connect it with the trainer's hand movement towards the branch. Once again she is given plenty of practice, but, if she does occasionally forget, her memory is jogged by her trainer pretending to be struck on the head and showing pained surprise as he moves away. She naturally responds to this slight unhappiness of her human friend by making sure it is not repeated. These matters can be thoroughly tried out in the grounds of the Centre, where the trainer has the use of a twenty-five yard obstacle course to give him every opportunity to practise until his dog's memory is perfect.

If trees, bushes, low archways and telegraph posts were all, the trainer's work would now be more or less finished, but such is the complexity of town life that there are other obstacles on pavements which completely block the path of a Guide Dog and a blind person. Large tankers and motor vehicles stop at garages for petrol, oil, and tyre pressure checks, and the attendant inconveniently swivels fuel pipes across the pavement, and pulls along his small trolley to help him inflate or change tyres. Exterior decorators, window dressers, firemen, and window cleaners cause some

difficulty by placing ladders from gutters and pavements against the walls of buildings. Workmen employed by Urban and District Councils, Highways Departments and private contractors have to dig holes and trenches in the most unexpected places and at the most unexpected times. Some of these obstacles form complete blockages in the path of a dog and her owner, and, being intelligent, a Guide Dog will go off the pavement of her own accord merely because she has no choice. This action would be done in training periods quite normally and naturally, but if for some obscure reason a dog were to hesitate, then her trainer would lead her off. All very well if a Guide Dog always walked alone or with a sighted trainer, but she does not. If she left a pavement without some warning to her future *blind* owner, he, or she, is likely to be taken completely by surprise and may miss the kerb with unfortunate consequences. The Guide Dog must not only realize that she must go off the kerb to get around obstacles, but she must be taught also to sit at the kerb so as to prepare a blind person for the drop down. The trainer goes to some pains to make sure that this always happens when an obstacle is met. He then leads the dog the whole length of the obstacle, keeping as close in as safety demands because of passing traffic, and takes her up on the pavement again as soon as she has negotiated the trench or whatever was the cause of the manœuvre. The dog usually does all this, both the wait at the kerb and the return to the pavement without her trainer's intervention, but if there is any doubt or hesitation she is coaxed and encouraged.

There are still other obstacles which need some attention, and in many ways they are the most extraordinary

of all—people! Human beings are difficult obstacles for dogs to negotiate just because they are people, and their actions cannot be systematically calculated. The unpredictability of their movements, the speed at which they move and the direction in which they might move pose a training problem of some magnitude. If the dog were to be trained to negotiate human beings constantly on the move and making sudden changes of direction, she may wonder what to do when people are talking together on the pavement, apparently quite motionless. We human beings must be a tiresome lot to dogs, for our attitudes and movements are totally inconsistent. To dogs, people are people and should be expected to act alike. Unfortunately, they never do. Some people walk more quickly than others; the habits and mannerisms of a group of people will be quite different in character. Furthermore, an increasing number of people in Britain are now aware of what a Guide Dog looks like. Often a dog will meet men and women on a walk, none of whom pay her the slightest attention or make any allowance for her,* and then suddenly she will come across a person who stops to allow her to pass. The trainer has a trying time in all this. When he wants to practise a dog with a natural or material obstacle, he can always find one in the grounds of the Training Centre, or on the pavements nearby, and if there is not it can easily be added to the obstacle course for the dog to practise on. How difficult by comparison to ask a few people to stand still so that he can practise his dog for ten minutes or so! In fact, this is itself an absurdity, for

*Boys and girls are exceptions. Guide Dogs and young people appear to be mutually attracted.

people rarely stand in the streets for any appreciable length of time! They are always likely to wander off for a few steps in one direction or another. It is, indeed, the inconsistency of the habits of pedestrians and their variable and unexpected movements which the dog has to master. The only course open for the trainer is to let the dog lead him whilst he gives her her head, coping with pedestrians as they come.

Many dogs deal with the vague wanderings of human beings miraculously well from the start but, if and when they err, assistance is provided by the trainer, and particular attention is paid to the few finding pedestrians a tiresome problem. If a dog loses her bearings and is hesitant about going around a pedestrian, or if she is unlikely to leave the trainer enough space, he smacks his thigh at a time when the dog is near enough to the individual in question for her to connect the sound with her proximity to the human being. The noise is considered by the dog to be in some way connected with her owner having brushed up against some kind of obstacle, rather as she connected a similar noise in her previous obstacle training. By the same principle, she feels rather unhappy at having caused her trainer a bump, and so makes the necessary allowance for him to move around. The smack is not, of course, in any way a threat to the dog. Smacking a Guide Dog would be the last thing to do, for this would upset her completely, making her nervous and consequently ruining her—even the slightest suspicion in the dog's mind that she is *likely* to be punished would have the same effect. The noise of the smack is accompanied by the usual request —"No". The combination of reproach in the voice with

attracting her attention by the smack influences the dog in her desire to please. Her reward? The pleasing tone of "Good girl" with which her success is always greeted. "Good girl" is undoubtedly the prescribed remedy for the training of Guide Dogs. Rarely does a dog do anything, even its most regular and easily accustomed movements, without hearing the familiar "Good girl". Dogs love their masters and are anxious to please them, and their trainers are always ready to give them the praise which is their due and which they want.

The obstacle work is concluded by continual practice and exercise in the grounds of the Training Centres and in the streets, so that a dog will have experienced meeting all sorts of obstacles under varied conditions. Any occasional errors or hesitations are corrected by the trainer until it can be assumed that every dog has become an expert. This is, in actual fact, more or less the end of the twelve weeks' training, although not all dogs can be regarded as entirely competent after this period. A few may need as long as six months.

One most important aspect of the dog's training, perhaps the most vital of all, has not yet been described: the dangers of modern traffic and the way the dogs are trained to meet them.

The traffic problem is taken concurrently with the later stages of the obstacle work and is not, therefore, treated as a separate issue. It would be almost impossible in modern Britain to go out into the streets for any kind of training and not find moving vehicles somewhere around. They rush along the roads when the dog is being given practice in the different stages of her training, and a watch is kept on her reaction to these

mechanical disturbers of the peace. These are first-class opportunities for calming any suspicions a dog may show by talking to her, and stroking her and, in general, introducing her kindly and sympathetically to the noises of the highways.

The actual crossing of a road can be dealt with when, and only when, the dog is an expert in obedience and obstacle work, and is quite unruffled by the presence of noise or of the vehicles themselves. When this stage has been reached there is no practical reason why the dog should not cross a road. All its trainer needs to do is to take it to a kerb where it will sit, as it has been trained to do and when it hears the command "Forward" it will move straight across by the shortest route and will "Stay" on the other side when told to do so. If the crossing was quiet and safe—and the trainer would not cross unless it was—then it would be plain sailing. Everybody knows, however, that there are times when everything is apparently safe and a motor car or lorry or bicycle will appear suddenly from around a corner and some physical action has to be taken to avoid them.

This is the kind of contingency for which a trainer has to prepare the dog to be ready and to do something about. An obvious difficulty would be when a dog is told to go "Forward", and attempts to cross the road with a blind owner, for how can the blind person know when to tell her to stop? In some way the trainer has to transfer the dog's response from the command "Stop" to the dog's automatic action,* and then for her to act without

*Three stages: "Stop" command with physical restraint; "Stop" with dog's automatic acceptance; dog stops without any prompting.

a command at all. This is actually what takes place; the dog avoids fast-moving traffic and does it without being told to do so.

How is this apparent miracle achieved? The success of the drill depends to a large extent on the ability of the future Guide Dog to regard moving traffic as a possible danger, and at the same time remain confident and unafraid of it. The dog's attitude must be the same as the average human being, who is conscious that moving traffic is a lethal weapon and needs the most careful watching, but who is not scared by it. Some years ago it was the policy of the trainers to take the dogs out into streets and roads and practise the drill on traffic as they encountered it, but, as many drivers are dog lovers and admirers, the continued movement of vehicles could not be entirely relied upon. Drivers would stop and motion the trainer and dog to cross in safety, which was the very reverse of what the trainer wanted. Nowadays, the drill has to be carried out by two trainers working together. One has the dog and the other drives a vehicle which is the property of the Training Centre.

The scene for the early part of the training is usually a quiet place where there are no distractions or interruptions. It is essential that everything works smoothly and that the dog is not attracted by some other movement or noise. The trainer with the dog waits at the kerb, with the dog sitting in her usual position. As the noise of the vehicle approaching on the nearside is heard, the dog's trainer tells her to go "Forward". As she does so the vehicle stops dead in front of her. At this crucial moment her trainer says "No" and restrains her from leaving the kerb.

What does the dog think about all this? She is not afraid of the noise of the vehicle. As far as she is concerned it is just another obstacle in front of her, which she would have gone round in her normal way except for her trainer's restraint. Repetition of the exercise makes her realize that this noisy moving obstacle, which approaches so noisily and then stops in front of her just when she is told to go "Forward", is somehow different, and she is not expected to find her way around it. On the contrary, she is being firmly prevented from moving or taking any action, and she is obviously supposed to wait. As she begins to realize this, she progressively falls into the prepared scheme of things as she is given constant practice. She further discovers that, once the vehicle has moved on again, her trainer allows her to proceed.

Trainers obviously devote a lot of time and attention to the dog's acceptance of this procedure, and only when she is fully competent do they carry on with the obvious corollary, which is to stop the vehicle a few yards short of her, and then a few feet, until she patiently waits for all traffic approaching on her nearside in front of which it would be dangerous for her to attempt to cross. She also realizes that, when a motorist is approaching on her nearside but stops short of her, perhaps to get out of his car and go into his office, it is quite all right for her to go on. Her sensitive ears have noted that there is not the slightest noise coming from the vehicle, that it is, in fact, stationary, and consequently that it is safe as far as she is concerned.

All that now remains is to carry out the same basic drill when she leaves the kerb on "Forward" and then

meets a vehicle approaching her from the left on the far side. This again is practised by the two trainers co-operating carefully together. A dog that has already had a good deal of care and attention training with traffic approaching on the nearside is likely to pick up her new drill all the more quickly. There is no basic difference at all as the motorist changes direction and cuts across her path—the trainer says "No", stops, and restrains the dog from forward movement. As soon as the vehicle has passed he allows her to proceed in the same direction. A hazard which is very difficult for anyone relying on hearing alone is the bicycle, and this is also not easy for the dog. A bicycle is comparatively silent compared with other vehicles, but the dog is not slow to detect and distinguish the joint factors of movement and sound. She has, of course, to be practised, and again the trainers co-operate in exercising her against this more silent menace; but she usually learns quickly, both with bicycles approaching her on the nearside and those which cut across her path as she is crossing a road. Once she has mastered both the noisy vehicles and the more silent bicycles in and near the Training Centres, she is ready to go into the busier parts of the town or city and carry out her new accomplishments on real motorists and cyclists. She is given plenty of opportunity for this!

The Controllers at the Training Centres are aware that these advanced traffic exercises, when the vehicle is being driven by a trainer, appear to onlookers to be situations in which an obviously "lunatic driver" is not fit to be on the road. "He only narrowly missed running down a young man who might have been killed if it had

not been that his marvellous dog stopped and prevented a catastrophe only just in time." Indeed, occasions are not unknown in which the "criminal" driving the vehicle has been verbally assaulted with shouts of anger.

The traffic problem is a progressive exercise which is carried out as the dog's training has advanced through obstacle work but, throughout the whole period, a trainer has to check on countless incidentals which the blind person can normally be expected to meet from day to day. Many of them may have been experienced during the Puppy Walking stages, but they will need reminders, and, of course, those dogs which were accepted as adults will need to be introduced to them and given even more experience. The dogs need to be constantly rechecked, and, even though a dog is known to be fully acquainted with certain of the incidentals, this is never interpreted as a guarantee that she needs no reminding.

The trainer, for example, takes a trainee on to buses, not merely to check for any signs of travel sickness, but to make certain of her confidence in assisting him up to the large step, and to ensure that she is not suspicious of the bell or the rapid acceleration of the motor, or of the grinding noise sometimes made by the gears. Once inside the bus the dog should sit quietly by her trainer's side, and if there is room, should lie under a seat. Railway stations should be visited and practice given in going through the narrow opening of the ticket collector's barrier, or finding the way to the Waiting and Refreshment Rooms, or to a seat. The dog must be aware of the large drop at the edge of the platforms, and she must concentrate on keeping her trainer away

Plate 9. Introduction to the white harness in the "Sit" position. The leash is retained by the trainer who talks to the dog as she sits in her new harness.

Plate 10. Introduction to the hard handle.

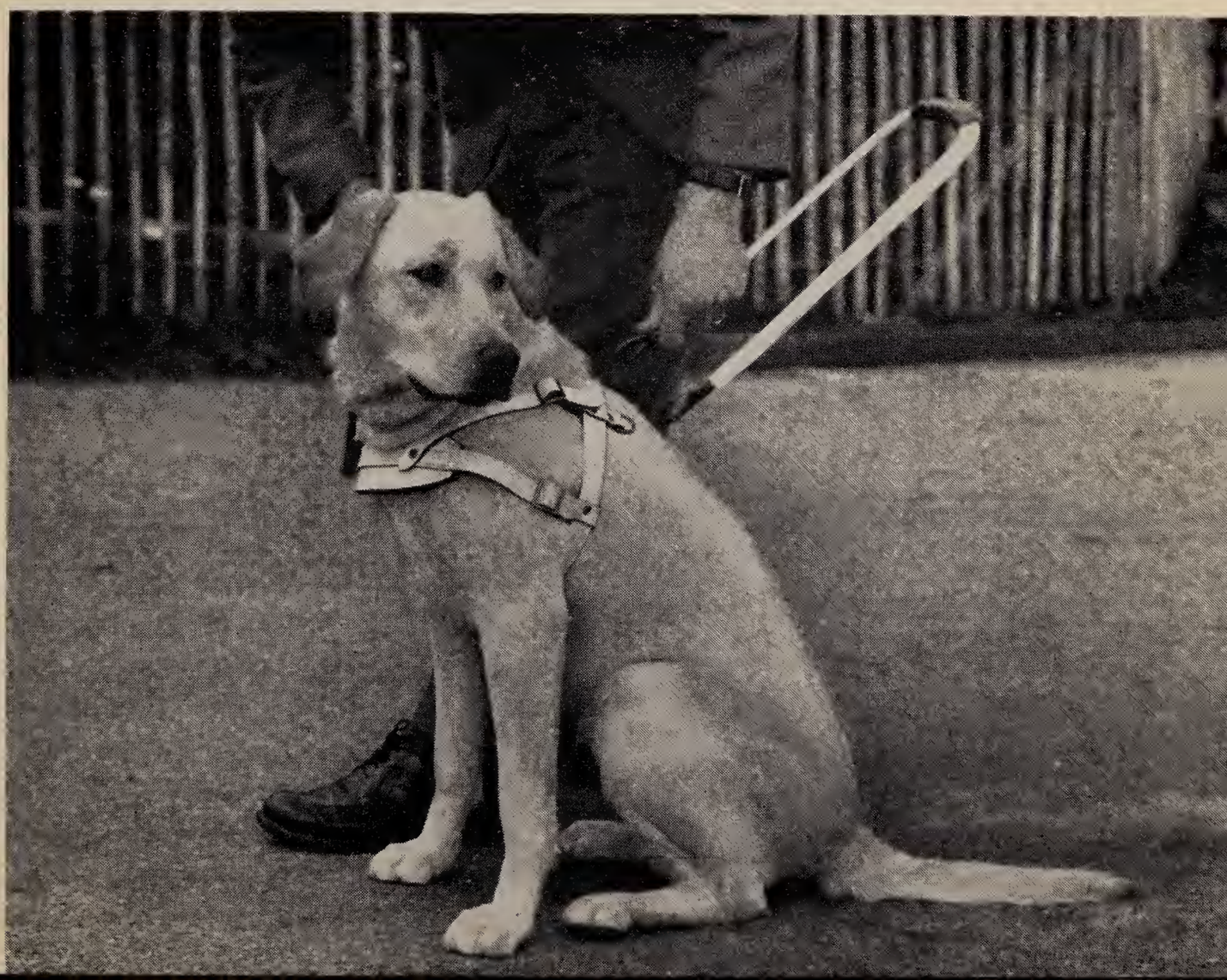

Plate 15. Obstacle training in a quiet street. The dog has momentarily lost concentration, and the trainer is left no room.

Plate 16. Success! The alert dog judges the space and gives her trainer plenty of room.

from such dangerous places. This also protects him from carriage doors which swing open as trains arrive with their passengers. The dog's attitude to the drop to the railway lines is similar to her attitude to a trench or a hole in a pavement. She would normally walk along the edge of the platform in order to find her way around it, and this needs to be discouraged. Continued visits to railway stations and practice in this drill are needed whenever an opportunity presents itself.

Finally, each recruit must be regularly introduced to cafés and hotels, to swing doors, and to a variety of shops, to ensure that she is not worried by any of the noises in places where people tend to congregate. They are taken into Woolworth's and Boots and into newsagents' shops and post offices, where they tend to weigh up the smells and noises and begin to distinguish between one shop and another. In fact, they are taken everywhere.

At the end of the training period the dog is fully educated and ready to begin her duties. She is now closely attached to her trainer and is devoted to him. What kind of man is the trainer of future Guide Dogs for the blind, and what is his background?

A trainer must be a person who has had a good education. He must be intelligent and have a broad basis of sound knowledge. He must have a flair for teaching the dogs, and the blind persons who come from all walks of life, and may well include teachers, lawyers, doctors and university professors. A trainer's physical fitness must be without question for, on an average, he will need to walk at least twelve miles per day, most days of the week, often in all kinds of weather. He should be

interested and practised in outdoor pursuits so that his reflex actions will have been sharpened well above the average. This helps him to react quickly in the dog's training period, and especially when an inexpert blind person is learning the elements of control with the dog, calling for prompt action at any time. Trainers, particularly skilful trainers, are by no means easy to find, and great care is taken in ensuring that only the best are selected. The qualities which are needed are varied enough to elude most young men. The job is really a vocation, and one of the most important qualities a trainer should possess is a profound interest in the welfare of blind people. It may well be that he finds his work exacting and at times something of a strain; and perhaps he has to work for much longer hours and for far less financial reward than many young men in other occupations. While this may be so, it is obviously just as true to say that he enjoys what he has selected and chosen to do, and would not care very much to do anything else.

The trainer's actual work is not quite as clear cut as it might appear. There are no books he can turn to for advice or help, and all his work is a matter of practical experience. Each day has its own problems and not until he is having his breakfast is he able to map out accurately the day's events. If it is fine, or if the dogs are sufficiently advanced, he will be able to go into the streets and into the town, perhaps to do obstacle work. If it is a wet day he will have to think of something inside which fits into the dog's stage of development, perhaps shop experience, or obedience work under cover at the Training Centre.

Each trainer has his own team of six or eight dogs to train, all at different stages of education, but roughly falling into the usual categories of preliminary, intermediate and advanced. As a trainer finishes his breakfast and prepares to go to the Training Centre for duty, he has already begun to sort out some of the problems he knows he will probably meet. When he arrives at the Centre he reports for a brief discussion with the Controller and his colleagues so that any relevant difficulties, connected with either certain dogs or training in general, can be ironed out beforehand.

At times his appearance in the town attracts a certain amount of attention. The local residents are quite used to seeing him, but strangers to the area cannot resist a lovely-looking dog and will colour his day by passing comments and asking questions about her. Most of the questions are commonplace enough and usually dwell on her breed, her age, and how she is trained. But a trainer of Guide Dogs gains much of his reward from the knowledge that his skill and effort will help blind persons in the very near future, and that the dogs he trains will make many things possible for their owners which are, at present, denied them.

Very occasionally a knowing visitor, seeing a young man being led by a Guide Dog and about to cross a busy road, will rush up and restrain him. Not even the young man's touching insistence that he is capable of looking after himself and that he really is not a blind man will do and, to spare misunderstandings on both sides, he allows himself to be taken across the road in safety.

Chapter Five

THE DOGS AND THE BLIND STUDENTS

THE general attitude of the blind in Britain in their approach to Guide Dogs differs from that in some countries abroad. Here Guide Dogs are in vogue, the demand insistent and growing, and although the Training Centres are working to full capacity, there is a long waiting list. This demand is partly accounted for by the large population but also by the deep attachment of the British to dumb animals.

The benefits so greatly prized are not simply physical. The blind take from their dogs much more than a pair of good eyes, as conversations with owners of Guide Dogs soon reveal. They benefit by a strong feeling of independence and being strongly aware of a real freedom to move, they enjoy a release from isolation; they can behave as most other people do; and they need not rely on the assistance of a friend or relation. It is their dog that attracts people's attention and not their incapacity. One blind owner summed up this change by relating a conversation with a stranger who told him that he had often seen him with his dog.

"It *is* a Guide Dog isn't it?" asked the stranger.

The blind owner assured him that it was.

"Then where did you get it?" continued the stranger.

"From a Training Centre for Guide Dogs," replied the owner.

"I still don't understand," said the puzzled chap. "I thought only blind people could get those dogs!"

How do people get their dogs? They usually write to the Association's Head Office in London, or to one of the Training Centres, and express a desire to have one. When their letters are received a form is sent for them to complete. This asks questions aimed at assessing them and their likely aptitude for future training. Children, of course, are ineligible, and so are women over forty-five years of age and men over fifty years of age because of the demands that a dog makes on inflexible limbs and fading senses. Occasionally, the age limits are reconsidered if an applicant happens to be mentally and physically outstanding.

The most powerful claim that a blind person can make is that the provision of a dog will help in the taking up, or continuing, of employment. Not only will this provide the means of earning a living, but it will also help to throw off the feeling of apparent uselessness and dependence on others. Questions are asked about the conditions at home where the dog will live, and about conditions at the place of employment where the dog will spend a considerable amount of time. The degree of mobility of the applicant must be known, as any physical handicaps may have a detrimental effect on the fully-trained dog and she may be temporarily spoiled. There should be no nervousness of any kind, either of noise or traffic, or, and most important, of other dogs. A medical report is required, and a report

from the Home Teacher who is employed by the Local Authority in the area concerned. Finally, the distance from the fingertips to the ground and the height and weight of the applicant must be known. Applicants whose replies on paper are encouraging need to be followed up in a more personal way, and they are usually granted an interview so that their physical and personal characteristics may be observed. It is revealing to watch people walk a few yards: all kinds of "rolls" and "jerks" are mixed among the "mincing" steps and "flatfoots". These are quite normal characteristics and it is difficult enough to encourage a dog to adapt her walk to them. How much more difficult is it, then, for the dog with people who appear to be caught "off balance" as they change direction and have to add a "skip" to steady themselves, whilst others just lean and lurch rather like a clumsy barge turning against the tide!

Personalities differ even more widely. Control of balance and gait is one thing and is no simple problem, but to discipline oneself and yet to be able additionally to control a dog is even more so. In a personal tête-a-tête it is possible to ascertain the strength or weakness of a person's ability to control a dog. Nobody is perfect, and some blind applicants are provisionally accepted subject to improvements here and there which are checked at other meetings. Others succeed at the first attempt.

It must seem a long time to blind applicants before the letters arrive telling them that they have moved up in the queue, and the day of release from the chains of blindness is not far away. There are no absentees on the day the Controller of the Training Centre waits to

welcome a new course! Students arrive prepared to stay for a month, for there is a lot to learn and a lot to do before they leave again. Most of them will have come from some distance away and will usually be accompanied by relatives or friends on whom they depend for safe travel from their homes. Often they have the familiar white stick of the blind as an extra aid, and for some of them the journey is a considerable effort. One lady confessed that she had not ventured far from her immediate surroundings for more than twelve years.

A warm and sympathetic welcome awaits them, but there is no opportunity for them to feel sorry for themselves. They are greeted as students who have not only come to learn, but also to fend for themselves. They are comfortably accommodated, but there is no extra staff to wait on them, for in no sense of the word is a Training Centre an hotel, although students are fed well and reside in comfortable and pleasant surroundings.

The men and women are organized into a class of eight, divided into two sections of four, each under a qualified trainer. Occasionally, owing to pressure of applications, there may well be more classes in residence if the Training Centre's establishment is well up to strength, but as trainers are fully occupied with the various stages of dog training as well, a single course of two classes is the ideal and the more customary.

It is appreciated that adults who have been restricted in movement and often in outlook for years need a few days in which to settle down and adjust themselves. They need to find their way around the Training Centre; they need also to make friends with one another and with their trainers. Even so, much valuable work

is done within forty-eight hours of their arrival. The trainers meet them in class and prepare them for what is to follow. The way that a Guide Dog works is explained to them and the fundamentals of its training are made clear. They are prepared for the many problems that they will come up against. Not all blind people will have owned a dog, and those who have will hardly have had occasion to handle a dog which has been selected as carefully as the Guide Dog and has been so well trained. They are told that the dog they will receive has been fully trained and it will be their responsibility to keep the dog in the same mental and physical condition as it was when placed in their care, and even, if possible, to improve upon it.

They hear how vital it is to use their voices and speak to the dogs, and the trainers emphasize strongly the fact that the voice is the most vital link of all in the dog's attitude to her work. She must know clearly by the tone of the voice whether she has given satisfaction and done her work well, or whether she has caused some displeasure, and the students are entirely responsible for giving praise whenever the dog does well. If, for some reason or other, the dog's work is not satisfactory, then she should be corrected. Encouragement and correction are the keys to the continued success of the dogs. They have always been used to them, and they cannot work up to their maximum efficiency without.

The blind students generally admit that they have no doubt about their dog's abilities, but they often confess to apprehension about their own confidence in dealing with them. This is hardly surprising. The qualities of leadership and control do not come easily to

everybody and, by the very nature of their handicap, blind people have, willingly or unwillingly, been led and controlled to some extent by others. The transfer of responsibility and leadership on to their own shoulders from the very outset of the course makes a considerable difference to their outlook. For a few this is the first time for years that their minds have been led along paths away from their own misfortunes or boredom. For others it provides a challenge to their will-power, and is the spur to their energies and determination to reach eventual success.

The trainers, consciously or not, release in the blind students a positive hope of equality with the rest of their sighted friends. As the students listen with mounting keenness and interest, they begin to recognize that the future depends on themselves, on what their dogs think of them, and on how they adapt themselves to the kind of relationship of which they must be aware has already been forged between dogs and trainers. Therefore, they concentrate with single-minded interest on the description of how the dogs are trained to work from kerb to kerb. They learn that the dogs move to left or right angles with the kerb, and that at kerbs they either await fresh orders or go forward in order to cross a road. A few of the students are quick to point out that they do not live in busy towns, but in quiet and remote country districts, where there are actually no pavements at all. They are reassured and pleasantly surprised when they hear that even this circumstance has not been omitted from the dogs' training.

The students are impressed, and, in some cases, amused when they learn that they are to be issued with

combs and brushes, not for themselves, but for the dogs they are to receive. They are to be responsible for grooming and also for feeding, and, in fact, all the needs of their guides will be their responsibility at all times. Although each dog has her own kennel, it is important that she is with her new owner continually, and by day and by night blind student and future guide will be together. In this way they discover, slowly but surely, all that there is to know about each other.

It is particularly important that the blind student should know the ways, the likes and dislikes of his future eyes. Even when they go home together the two are inseparable. Not all blind people have the necessary space for outdoor kennels, and for a dog and human being who have to live and work on such close association the constant presence of the other is a tremendous link in their relationship.

The trainers already know the dogs thoroughly, but before they can even begin to train the blind students they must have formed clear pictures of the individuals in their charge. Obviously in matters of physique, character and temperament, they will differ from each other. Some will be fairly vigorous for their age and others will have the advantages of youth on their side. There may be one or two students of a modest, quiet, and even retiring nature, and others who are more confident, perhaps slightly over-anxious and over-keen. All these behaviours and reactions of the students will need to be noted and compared most carefully with the known data of the dogs. It may not be possible at any given time to have exactly the right number of the right kind of dogs for the particular temperaments of a given

class of students, but as this has been foreseen, there are always a few dogs held back in reserve for just these eventualities. Occasionally a very tall blind person will apply for a dog. Such deviations from the normal can always be catered for and such a person will be called forward when a particular dog of unusual height and strength has completed her training. For all these reasons a first appraisal of the students is essential, and, until it has been made, only a provisional pairing of dogs to students is carried out.

The provisional pairings, essential though they are, can only be confirmed by putting them to the test of practice. This is done by a trainer playing "dog" to each student in his class. A "dummy" handle, a replica of the real handle attached to the harness of the dog, is used to give the student his first "feel", and the trainer a confirmation of his findings. In the grounds of the Training Centres students are asked to hold one end of the handle in their left hands and close to their body, whilst the trainer grips it in his right hand in the position the dog normally occupies. Now the trainer is the "dog" in action but, as trainer, he tells the blind student how to move off and how to give commands. "For . . . ward" calls the trainer. "For . . .ward" commands the student nervously, and to his great surprise he is moved at a pace considerably quicker than he expected. A blind person normally tends to walk rather steadily, but the speed of a Guide Dog averages four miles per hour. One blind owner now with his second dog, a Boxer called "Kim", has a vivid recollection of how he felt on this occasion. Almost falling on his face at the sudden momentum, he was pulled out of the gates of the Training Centre.

Out of condition and short of wind he found he almost had to canter as he was dragged into the lanes nearby, his trainer yelling fresh directions every now and then. "Le . . . ft" — "Ri . . . ght", he weakly puffed as a "confident" command to his energetic "dog". After what seemed one of the longest "runs" in his life he was propelled back to the Training Centre where he gratefully collapsed into a chair. Mopping his brow, he inquired whether his general debility and lack of Olympic ability meant he would be unsuitable for further training. To his utter astonishment he was told by his trainer that he was now convinced that the dog which had been selected for him would be the right one.

Practice with the "dummy" handle is a bridge by means of which a trainer can teach his students how to give good commands and at the same time demonstrate how the dogs stop at kerbs and move off only as ordered. The method of talking to the dogs and the importance of encouraging and correcting them is driven home, and a buffer is created which helps dogs and students to soften the shocks that would be experienced if they were paired too abruptly.

Two or three days after they have arrived for training the students have the one experience they never forget. With a sense of excitement and nervousness, they are asked to go to their rooms, where they are to wait for the dogs which have been selected to be their guides. The procedure is simple and effective. Their trainers, they are told, will bring the dogs and they are to make friends with them. They must talk to them and make frequent use of the dogs' names. They must be patient

and kind and not worry unduly if what takes place is not everything they expected it to be.

Of all the treasured reminiscences of new students and experienced owners alike none stay longer in their minds and are so easily recalled than this first introduction. They confess to their own fears readily. What if she doesn't like me? What if I do something wrong? What if my ignorance and clumsiness puts her off? The blind students recall that they can hardly believe that dogs which have so firm an attachment and respect for their trainers can possibly think highly of them. One lady summed up this opinion almost bluntly: "He is such a clever man; and I am such a clot with dogs!"

It would be impossible to catalogue all that happens, but the dogs appear to be the dominant characters when they go into the bedrooms to meet their new owners for the first time. When they are introduced by name and handed over the reactions are varied. Some snuggle up immediately to delighted cries of "She likes me", or, "What a lovely cold nose". Others eye the beds knowingly and settle down on them for a comfortable sleep.

The students' fears are only natural and, indeed, they would hardly be human without them. Guide Dogs are by selection and training the friendliest of dogs and suspicion of people is completely foreign to their natures, so that the risks of failure attendant upon the introduction are not really great. Nor would the students have been approved if there had been the slightest suspicion of their own attitudes towards dogs. Even so, the occasion is always emotional, and from the moment it takes place each student is aware that he has been fortunate enough to have had the pick of the dogs, not just of their

course, but of all courses ever held! "From the first moment I met her I knew she was meant only for me!" is the kind of sentiment which in one form or another is contained in many letters which have been received by the Controllers of the Training Centres.

Now begins the slow and arduous process during which a dog's affections are transferred from her trainer to her new owner. This is a progressive growth in relationship over many days and weeks and indeed, for a considerably longer period than the blind student had ever envisaged. The trainer is still the centre of the dog's life. The period is a worrying one for all members of the triangle, and the trainer is, in these early days, still very much in control. He walks with the student and dog, fully conscious that the latter has not yet accepted the change in ownership. She often turns her head in his direction as if to ask if the student knows what to do. The student lacks experience and yet is attempting to give the impression of complete confidence, and the trainer has, at all times, to be ready to assist, particularly when crossing roads. His is the position of a driving instructor on those worrying occasions when a learner begins to drive a car for the first time. The student is often bewildered by the momentum and balance and is trying to concentrate on the guide, on himself, and on the trainer's advice at one and the same time. As the confidence of the blind student grows, his nervousness disappears, and, in a more relaxed frame of mind, he tries to carry out the essentials of control; but, because his attempts are unskilled, the trainer is still in control of the dog. This is a most difficult stage: the dog, in effect, has to accept commands from an unskilled

stranger and ignore her trainer. The length of time which is required to effect complete transfer and control differs according to the capability of the blind student and the adaptability of the dog.

In the early stages of training, it is a common fault for the student to forget to use his hands. The blind have often grown accustomed to being led and guided by friends and relations. In the darkness of blindness they have been practised, or even expert, in feeling their way with their white sticks, and on the occasions when they have asked another person for a route they have heard the directions, but naturally have never seen any signals. Trainers have, therefore, to re-educate them in the importance of indicating changes of direction by suitable hand gestures with their right or free hand. They are reminded that their dogs can see and are quick to notice movement, and are considerably assisted by the combined use of voice and hand signals. The signals also help them to visualize the commands more clearly in their mind's eye, and this gives them confidence and balance when they change direction from static positions at kerbs. Hand signals are included as part of the dog's training because of the need to have a non-verbal sign which the dog is known to accept. The dogs do not always adjust themselves so readily to voices of strangers, and in the early stages of training blind students are regarded as strangers as distinct from their trainers.

The trainers follow the pattern of routine which the dog has already been through alone. By now the dog knows what to do when she reaches an obstacle, reaches a kerb, or meets traffic. The blind student appreciates

that the dog is trained, but, as yet, is not sure of what responsibility he has in relationship to her. If, for example, a blind student is walking along a pavement and is expecting the guide to walk in a straight line as she has been trained to do, what should be done if she hesitates or is felt to move away to one side or the other?

On one occasion during training the following took place: A student and a Labrador bitch were walking along a side street, quite slowly and quite happily, with their trainer a few paces behind. The pavement was narrow, as is not unusual in many English towns, and everything went without incident until the small party approached a garage on the right-hand side. The garage doors, wooden ones, were wide open and from an outside petrol pump a narrow pipe extended across the pavement and ended in the tank of a scooter which had just moved off the road for refuelling. The Labrador saw the scooter and moved slightly to the right in order to pass between it and the open doors of the garage. She then saw that she could not do this because of the pipe, and so she hesitated for direction. The blind student felt the move and the hesitation, and was apparently upset by the dog's reaction, particularly as he could hear nothing in the vicinity. The trainer went to his assistance and told him to let the dog lead him, and give her encouragement by calling her name and saying "Hup—Hup", a general form of encouragement to a Guide Dog (rather like saying "Gee-up" to a horse). The dog veered round in a semi-circle, looked into the garage and decided to go in, doubled back, and then headed for the pavement in the usual way. The incident ended

happily by student and guide arriving back on the pavement with the scooter behind them.

The blind student must obviously be alive to his or her responsibility where a road has to be crossed. Many important cross roads, and all major ones, are controlled automatically by traffic lights. Some people believe that Guide Dogs are able to detect the changes of colour, but alas, like so many stories, this is not true. It is the blind student, and not the dog, who must learn how to understand when a crossing is favourable. It is a combination of the student's hearing with a blind person's customary keen awareness of the flow of traffic, both when it is moving favourably in the same direction and when it is moving across and against the proposed route that student and dog rely upon. When vehicles which are facing in the same direction as a student begin to move off, and other waiting pedestrians with them, then it is the correct time to give the dog the "Forward" order and make the crossing. Sometimes, when the pair are in "mid-stream", a vehicle changes direction and cuts across their path, but the trained dog stops and waits for it to pass before proceeding to the other side. It would be a brave person who had no qualms about a dog's abilities on the first excursion, but confidence soon grows and doubts disappear.

The Guide Dog's abilities in traffic are a source of amazement to an onlooker. The secret of her success, and her successes are amazingly consistent, is a complete lack of fear on the one hand, and a real appreciation that moving vehicles can spell trouble on the other. It is easy to imagine a blind student half-way across a road, gripping the handle firmly and hanging on to the

dog like grim death, rather as a child and parent cling to each other when they are caught in busy traffic. This is not the case. Once the pavement is left behind, the student calmly encourages the dog as she leads the way, allowing just enough freedom on the harness for the dog to move in a relaxed way, and at the same time providing some flexibility in case an emergency should arise. Fortunately, emergencies are very rare and the vast majority of crossings by blind students and guides are made as well, and even better, than by sighted persons. There are no records of any emergencies during training, and those which occur later are no more than the narrow escapes that most people experience at one time or another.

Blind students and Guide Dogs do not cross roads according to their whims or convenience. Crossings are normally made at those junctions where a number of pavements converge, and also at zebra crossings. All kinds of fickle human behaviour have their fling around road junctions and zebra crossings. Newspaper-sellers hang around for prospective clients; police officers wait for the rush-hour traffic jams; town and city workers and shoppers cross endlessly from one side to another. These are places where the trainers assist the students to interpret the many complications which will be encountered at later dates. Although students have been advised and warned about difficulties near to busy crossings, they are at times surprised when they meet them in reality in the early stages of their training.

One male student was having an outdoor session one Saturday morning when, as is usual, the streets were full of cars and pedestrians. As student and dog were

approaching a major road junction in the town's centre the trainer asked him to give his dog the command "to the kerb", a common request. The student did as he was told and expected to be taken straight to the kerb, but was rather bewildered as he felt a move to one side. A group of lady shoppers were discussing the January Sales and were barring the way. The student's trainer quietly reminded him of previous explanations in lectures and pointed out that this happening was a typical example of the kind of thing he could expect as his training continued and, indeed, in the days ahead in his own familiar home town.

Coping with moving vehicles at major junctions and the crossing of roads with all the distractions around necessarily takes a fair amount of training time. Not all vehicles are on the move, of course, and there are usually many more parked along side streets, where they tend to poke out at the ends as harassed motorists hope they will remain inconspicuous for at least a brief period as they carry out a quick errand. Parked traffic is dealt with quite normally by the dog. She regards them as stationary obstacles, and even though she may have to make a detour around a bulging rear boot or radiator, she does it with full awareness that the vehicle is not moving, and is, therefore, no different from any other material object. In the early stages of training, when a student is going along the wide pavement of a main road, there may be a moment's surprise when a dog has crossed unhesitantly from one kerb to another where side streets lead into the main highway, then making a strange detour at the third or fourth. Once again the trainer explains that a parked car was in the

way of a straight crossing, and that the dog was going around a kind of obstruction.

In all these trips into the unknown the qualified trainer accompanies the two explorers like a mother hen and her two chicks, always encouraging, always ready to help according to the student's rate of progress in the control of the dog, always advising the student in the way to give commands and direction, and keeping up an informative commentary about what is taking place. "She is watching another dog on the other side of the street. Talk to her and encourage her to concentrate." "You are approaching a crossing where your dog will stop. I want you to do a left turn with her at the crossing and then go along another street. Left turn, remember!" "She did that very well. *Good* girl. Tell her she is a good girl." And so it goes on, each new day maintaining and developing a close working partnership between dog and student. That the student has learned to worship the dog is hardly surprising, but his respect for the trainer concerned is also boundless. No other trainer knows quite as much about dogs, and certainly no other could possibly have coped so efficiently and so sympathetically with his faults and limitations!

Faults in the students are real and need correction. One fault which can affect the efficiency of a dog's work is a failure on the part of a student to appreciate to the full the supreme importance of verbally encouraging and praising good results. There can be no doubt that the student is aware of the desirability of doing so, but fails to put his thoughts into words at the time the dog really needs to hear them. There is a delightful story of

a male student whose dog silently endured a famine of complimentary remarks for many days until the time was ripe for her master to be taught a bitter lesson. Approaching a particularly rigid and unyielding obstacle, she took it upon herself to take her master straight into it and awaited his surprised complaint like a true lady. Her student had still to get around the offending enemy, and only she could assist him, so that a normal and correct negotiation on her part at the second attempt produced an abundance of complimentary verbal bouquets which more than atoned for the previous silence.

The dogs, too, have their shortcomings, and they must be corrected by the student. Guide Dogs are not infallible just because they are Guide Dogs. They can, if left without good control, fail to do their work as well as they are able and this can develop into a serious problem later if it is not checked. If a student fails to correct a dog which is not working well, the fault is the student's, much more than the dog's. The use of the voice, and the choice of the right tone is the remedy which the student must apply in order to show the dog the error of her ways, but, if the worker is tending to become lethargic, a precautionary tug on the harness will help to remind her of her responsibilities.

All training is directed towards, and centred on, coping with the concentrations of energy in modern life —the towns and cities. Training Centres are sited as near to them as possible, a policy which was begun in the early days of the thirties when Wallasey, on busy Merseyside, was chosen as a suitable centre. Guide Dogs are products of the towns, although a small percentage

of them may find themselves country dwellers. (A few Guide Dog owners carry on such rural occupations as small-holders, and poultry-farmers).

The day of departure brings mixed feelings, for the students make many friendships and have enjoyed their common experiences together. A few vaguely wonder if the dog can be quite the same when she leaves her trainers and the other dogs. It was all right when there was opportunity to ask questions and when the trainers explained the difficulties and how to overcome them; but most students are full of confidence and are eager to get home and show off their new freedom and capabilities to others. One or two of the men are aching to learn of the landlord's reaction at the local when they arrive alone and unescorted and go up to the bar for a pint instead of having it brought to a table. The last day is, however, not the end of the matter—far from it!

Things can and do go wrong when the blind owners and their dogs begin to live in partnership in their homes. But, whatever the problems are, they must not continue until they become too serious, so it is arranged that all Guide Dog owners are provided with a Monthly Report Form which they are to return to the Controller who was responsible for their training. In this way, their problems are brought into the open before they develop, and they can be examined and checked by a regular and comprehensive range of questions. The Controllers receive replies to questions such as: What is the dog's general condition? How is it working? Is it lethargic or too fast? Is it obedient? How is it doing at kerbs? at obstacles? at traffic?

Good health in a Guide Dog is of overriding importance. The physical condition of each dog is checked at half-yearly intervals by a qualified veterinary surgeon without any charge either to the blind person or the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. This service is an example of the generosity of a busy profession, and deserves to be made more widely known.

It can be appreciated that a new home in a strange area, where general conditions are entirely different from life in a Training Centre, may tend to have a temporarily unsettling effect on a Guide Dog. The blind person is provided for to a great extent by information given to him on the course concerning a dog's psychological make-up, in other words, the mental and emotional characteristics which he knows as temperament. Her settling-in period usually passes with the help and patient understanding of her owner, but if, when this stage is over, the Monthly Report Forms reveal some trouble of a more serious nature, it may be advisable for a trainer to visit the home of the dog concerned. Even owners whose reports show all is well can expect a routine call each year, and if nothing else results from such visits, at least the reasons for the excellent situation can be assessed and noted.

So Guide Dogs and owners settle down in their homes and begin their lives together. Many and varied are their callings: telephone operators, market gardeners, clerks, teachers, piano-tuners, parsons, physiotherapists, craftsmen. The basic training that their dogs have received, and their own course with the professional staff of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, have resulted in the new and precious freedom of unrestricted

mobility. But first and foremost Guide Dog owners experience a fresh zest for life and a companionship with a canine friend, who becomes in essence a part of their being and an additional sense. Blind persons write to the Controllers of the Training Centres and reveal that this companionship and strong affection is by no means a factor to be regarded as of small consequence. Hope, faith and trust remain virtues to which the hearts of men react deeply, and for blind persons they are truths to which they can testify without sentiment.

A GUIDE DOG IN SCOTLAND

Chapter Six

STORIES ABOUT GUIDE DOGS

BLIND owners who have had a Guide Dog for any appreciable amount of time are often able to tell fascinating stories of the amazing talents their "eyes" possess. They will have enjoyed a relationship of dog and man with which many who have lived and worked with dogs are only in part familiar. There are hundreds of stories about the ways in which fully-trained dogs have surprised trainers and owners by their ability to develop and extend the limits of what they have learnt. There appears no limit to the extension of training, with man or dog. Athletes regularly excite their coaches and themselves, by setting up new records which seemed at one time to be beyond any man's powers, and a stage has been reached in which no demonstration of training can be regarded as the ultimate. What is true of man is equally true of the dog. Stories about Guide Dogs differ from the stories of other trained dogs in certain important respects. Because Guide Dogs work in close contact with their owners, so close that the two begin to behave as one, the senses of both (with the exception of the sight of the owner) are fully attuned together. The sensations of the dog are transmitted via the harness to the holder who is able to

develop a new kind of sense. Again, without a dog a blind person is often dependent on another human for direction and guidance, a person who can tell him what to avoid and lead him by hand and voice. The dog replaces this dependence by giving a blind person freedom in the sense that he can receive the feelings of the dog and interpret them in his own way. This close association, combined with the owner's interpretation of a dog's reaction to situations, provide experiences which result in new kinds of stories—the stories of Guide Dogs.

The stories fall conveniently into the following categories: stories in which the training the dog received is extended beyond the content of her instruction; stories in which the close union of dog and owner have resulted in a new sensory intelligence together; stories in which the freedom of the blind person vividly contrasts with the dependability on the white stick and human aid; and finally, stories with a touch of humour.

Sunny

Sunny, a golden Labrador bitch was the first Guide Dog owned by a lady living in the Midlands. Confidence in her dog was not immediate, and the fears of her friends were no help to her assurance. They were frankly horrified at the thought of a "dumb animal" being responsible for her in the busy streets, and spared no pains in saying so. One or two common enough experiences did wonders in dispelling her fears and brought a power of faith in Sunny.

The first experience began with a letter in the morning post which was read to her by a friend. The letter

asked her to make an important telephone call during the evening, which would be during the hours of darkness. When the time came nobody was available to help, and she was entirely dependent on Sunny taking her to a public call-box. Going along the street was easy enough, but the position of the call-box was a matter for conjecture and one or two vain attempts were made to find it. The time for the arranged call did not permit a long reconnaissance and in a fit of desperation Sunny was asked to "Find me the call-box"—"Find me the call-box", a command far removed from those in the training she had received.

A brief journey ended in Sunny making a definite and determined halt, and to her blind owner's surprise her hands came into contact with the familiar outline of a telephone box. Greatly encouraged by Sunny's powers, and now instinctively realizing that she could be depended on entirely, her blind owner asked her to lead her to the door, the only glass side of the four. This was also done without doubt or hesitation.

Sunny also causes astonishment by always going to the right door of the local post office which has had a modern extension added on to it. The former office is used as a store, but the old door, although locked and unused, is still there. Sunny never goes to this door although she has to pass it to get to the new one.

Beau

Beau was the first Guide Dog to be trained in Australia. He also was able to learn commands which were not a part of his basic training and which gave his

owner every opportunity to ease her everyday problems. Whenever Beau's mistress went on her shopping expeditions during this early period together she tried him out by indicating aloud which shop she liked to go into for particular goods. The shop she visited for her week-end cake delicacies, she clearly informed him, was "Cake shop", and the place where she liked to go for her floral decorations was plainly "Flower shop". Beau took to this rather like a duck to water and very soon a brief command motivated his four legs confidently to the shop needed. Never was he caught out and his mistress was saved the bother of guiding him by "rights" and "lefts" to the approximate area, where she would have needed to ask for some assistance to find the right door.

Beau was able to develop his strong association for things to a high degree of selection. The mere command of "stamps" at the post office was enough to start him off to the end of the counter where stamps were available. "Parcels" or "Airmail" would cause him to nose his way to the counter and grille where these special items were handed over or purchased. In large department stores he was a "star turn" and saved his mistress's legs by finding out where the lifts operated. After some experience of them he was able to distinguish between "Up" and "Down", a notable feat indeed as mere humans often have to study the irritating little lights which dither around as the lifts make up their mechanical minds. Outside in the streets he was no amateur either, and a request for "bus stop" hardly ever found him wanting, not even in areas where owner and dog were strangers.

Kim

Yet another example of the extension of the basic commands which a Guide Dog receives is contained in an attractive account which concerns Kim. Kim was owned by a blind clergyman who had owned a Guide Dog before. He had not only to preach and take services in his own parish, but he had also to meet the wishes of those who wanted him to come and officiate at churches in other towns and cities in northern England. Before he was trained with his first dog, which, unfortunately, was killed when it was loose—a reminder that Guide Dogs out of harness or off the leash are as vulnerable as other dogs—these long journeys were a difficult problem. He often needed the help of an escort at either end.

Kim not only changed all this, but made such remarkable progress that the clergyman found that he was able to get around as easily as a sighted person. Kim became his eyes and also an extra sense. He was quite a traveller and relieved the strangeness and inconvenience of one-night stays at hotels and lodgings in the most expert ways. Calling only to leave his luggage at the hotel, his master was taken by Kim to a church as soon as the dog saw one near, and it was nearly always the right one. After the service Kim only needed to hear "Home" to retrace his steps to the hotel for the night. In the morning, a fresh instruction of "Home" would set him off to the railway station, but only when his master had remembered to pick up his luggage.

Kim extended his talents on trips to hospitals where

his master visited sick parishioners who were under his spiritual care. After only one introduction to a new inmate he was able subsequently to go unerringly to the bed where the patient lay.

Roger

Sighted persons are often confronted with situations which they do not expect and which they have to solve. Dog and blind owner meet unexpected situations too, and in some inexplicable way the problem is also met and solved, but the intelligence used is not the same. The strangeness of what the dog sees is conveyed by its body via the harness to the owner. A tautness or quiver of the dog's muscles is felt with an acute sensitivity by the blind owner, who must either rely on the dog's judgment and give her freedom in which to work, or else in one way or another unite with the dog and help it in its investigations.

Roger was a large and exceedingly handsome Collie. At the time of the event his mistress was a town dweller whose heart and longings were in the countryside. Roger loved to take his mistress walking among the exciting aromas of the fields and countryside. Many of their favourite walks were greeted with obvious approval, but he was equally enthusiastic in the pleasurable discovery of new paths.

One day when his mistress and her guide were out in fresh territory Roger, for no apparent reason, became obstinate and refused to go on. All the normal remedies were tried; encouragement and praise were poured into his ears, but the command "Forward" had become a

meaningless repetition for all the notice he took. There seemed only one possible solution—Roger must be tired and must feel that he had walked far enough. Dog owners everywhere have suffered the stubborn obstinacy of a pet which just sits down and cries "enough"! Roger's mistress made up her mind to return home, but even this enticing prospect failed to arouse the enthusiasm of her guide. Surely he could not have had a mental blackout and just forgotten everything?

After a few minutes which seemed much longer Roger did move. Slowly but surely he began to feel his way about in an odd and rather meaningless manner, his mistress allowing him to lead her with a sense of relief that something was happening at last. Suddenly he found his bearings, and they were again on a definite path which appeared to please him and dispel the memories of his recent anxieties. Then his mistress sensed that Roger had been making a detour around something he had wished to avoid, a feeling that was later confirmed when she discovered they had been confronted by a dam! Friends told her that the only way across it was by way of a rather frail rustic bridge. Roger had stopped to look it over and had decided it was too tricky a proposition to negotiate with his beloved mistress. He had decided to find another and safer way to the other side.

Greta

Greta was born in the beautiful and sunny state of California in the United States. She was also lucky enough to be trained there with a blind student who

had travelled to meet her from the less temperate regions of northern Missouri. When Greta left her birthplace to travel on her first long journey with her mistress she had been fortunate enough never to have known the rigours of a severe winter.

All good things come to an end, even for lucky dogs. One night, as mistress and dog were fast asleep in the shelter and warmth of their home, there was a particularly heavy fall of snow. Traffic and pedestrians are often handicapped by the unexpected vagaries of nature, but the problems they present to the owners of Guide Dogs can be tiresome in the extreme. Familiar pavements and well-known routes disappear under a white blanket, and the definite edges of kerbs on which Guide Dogs depend are often obliterated.

The Missouri blizzard had accomplished in a few bleak hours what it would take several days to undo, but people have to go to work in spite of the conditions. Greta and her mistress had to make the journey into the neighbouring town as usual, but, unknown to them, there was one difference in store. A ditch ran across the approaches to the town, and the only way of crossing it was over a narrow rustic bridge which was reached by a few steps. The fall of snow had buried the steps, so that when Greta arrived, not only was the ditch levelled by the snow, but the steps were no longer visible. On reaching the area of the ditch Greta was to all intents and purposes lost, or she should have been, for the landscape was totally changed and she was surrounded by snow, a commodity she had not previously encountered.

Greta could still see the bridge and led her owner near to it. She then anxiously pawed away at the snow,

moving about from one position to another. Her mistress realized the dog was having difficulty and stooped down to help her. After a few minutes of joint effort, Greta and her owner found what they were both searching for—the edges of the steps which led up to the rustic bridge. Dog and mistress crossed in safety.

Vangy

Railway stations are happy hunting grounds for many Guide Dogs. They contain just about everything that a dog is ever likely to meet; lots of people, going in every direction at the same time; crowded platforms made hazardous by small motor vehicles transporting mail and luggage from place to place; busy cafés and restaurants; the drop on to the railway lines; and the savage, snorting trains with doors opening and closing on arrival and departure.

Vangy, a Boxer bitch, lived near to East Ham Underground in London. Vangy was not a frequenter of the station and it was only by chance that the events of her story ever took place. A friend of her mistress had moved from East Ham to Bethnal Green and had invited them both to pay a visit to her new home. Railway officials were kind to them, as they usually are to Guide Dogs and their owners, and made most helpful suggestions to ease their first journey. It would be best for them to travel in the first coach from East Ham to Mile End, where they should get out and make for the stairs close at hand which would lead them to the Bethnal Green train.

Armed with this sensible instruction Vangy and her

mistress waited on the platform for their train, and as arranged, boarded the leading compartment. They counted the stops for Mile End and stood near to the doors ready to step out. All doors on the London Underground open and close automatically. When the doors were heard to open Vangy's mistress gave her the command "Forward". Then the inexplicable happened, for Vangy disobeyed the order and refused to budge. All pleadings and coaxings failed, and it was obvious the doors would close again and they would be taken on to the next station. This actually did happen, but a passenger in the next coach who had watched them, but had been unable to help in time, was able to clear up the mystery. The train had overshot the platform, and by going forward both she and her owner would have dropped on to the lines. Vangy was more than pleased to hear how good a girl she was!

Floss

Many blind persons living near to large cities and towns find the railways their most convenient form of transport, and they rely on them for their daily journeys to and from their place of employment. Guide Dogs can become extraordinarily adept in the confused world of stations and platforms and soon need no verbal directions to help them. The freedom of mobility is an exciting reality for the blind owners.

One dog, Floss, a Bearded Collie living near Wandsworth Common, on the outskirts of London, became a seasoned campaigner in the hurly-burly of "peak" hours. Her mistress, employed in the City, the core of

London's activities, walked every morning to catch her train from Clapham Junction to Waterloo, generally regarded as one of the busiest stations. Here they had to change for a train to take them to the City where they were employed as a telephonist. The return journey was close after office hours when all Londoners are on the way back home, but Floss coped calmly and confidently with all stations and all platforms, always going to the right station and never mistaking the platforms. She did this herself without any need of direction or command of any kind whatsoever.

Volly

The Guide Dog accustoms herself over the years to coping with moving and stationary obstacles. Pedestrians, moving vehicles, trees, ladders and all the usual features of modern life present no problem to the well-trained dog working in sympathetic union with her owner. Occasionally, a dog is confronted by obstacles which are rather exceptional. Some would cause a sighted human being to ponder for a while.

Volly, the hero of this simple but revealing story, took his master to work every day along the busy Kilburn High Road in London. At one period the Highways Department had decided that major repairs were necessary and had descended on the area with devastating intent. Volly took all these human activities in his stride, and his careful detours around the picks and shovels of the workmen had soon ceased to be any cause for wonder. His daily negotiations were taken for granted and were even on the point of becoming monotonous.

One morning his familiar and confident approach

was awaited by the workmen with a certain expectation, and there was a keen concentration in the air. Volly and his master soon came into view and the latter quickly appreciated that there had been a change in the obstacles of the previous day. There was a sway under his feet which he correctly associated with the yielding timber of a plank. Three planks were crossed in rapid succession, when it became obvious by the murmuring of voices nearby that something unusual had taken place.

"Well done indeed," a strange but friendly voice said. "There was only enough room for the two of you." Volly had taken him across three open trenches within a distance of fifty yards.

Continuing on his way with his proud owner, Volly gave him another surprise by turning left at a place where they always went straight ahead, consequently ignoring a street which was on their familiar route to work. The blind man gave the dog his head and followed him trustingly, noting mentally, as Volly then veered right, that he was executing a loop to join the offending street higher up. His guess was well-founded and they arrived at work safely and only a few minutes late.

The following evening he was full of his dog's exploits and discussed them with the local policeman, who explained that the loop had been necessary because the "spurned" street was completely blocked to all traffic by repair work.

Not all stories about Guide Dogs are serious; many have a humorous flavour. The embarrassment of a Kent male owner can only be imagined when he trusted his

dog's supreme "intelligence" to so great an extent that he instructed his four-legged wonder to take him to the public lavatory on a main-line railway station. The dog was quick to comply with his master's request, but precipitated him into a delicate situation by guiding him into the "Ladies", where his presence was neither welcome nor appreciated.

Folly

Folly was a Labrador bitch undergoing her period of training with her blind student, a man. One pleasant afternoon Folly and her student had a relief from their concentration on work by taking an "off duty" walk in the lanes near to the Training Centre. They enjoyed this excursion together and the blind student was only reminded that he had in fact been out with a Guide Dog when they were on the side walks leading up to the door of the Centre. Folly's zig-zag manoeuvres told the student that they were negotiating the artificial obstacles around which they had done particularly good work a few days before. As they arrived at the main door, Folly's trainer greeted them both and inquired if they had enjoyed their walk. The student was quick to tell him how well they had done, and how beautifully they had done the obstacle course alone and without his supervision. Folly's trainer complimented him on his notable success, which was nothing short of remarkable as the artificial obstacles had been removed and were in the store! "Showing off" is a charming feature of a young dog's personality and is very close to a child's.

Pat

Guide Dog owners are warned never to walk in front of their dogs. The owner's brain and experience is an essential part of their working as a team, but the eyes of the dog are infallible and must be respected. Pat was taking her owner along a cart track which ran through some large fields, providing a short cut to the neighbouring village. This was a regular route for Pat and she knew every inch of the way, never having met with any difficulty, and not even the presence of a cow had ever disturbed her forward march.

Her owner was nonplussed when Pat stopped in her tracks and refused to go on. Time and again she was told to proceed, and each request was obstinately rejected in favour of an about-turn to go home again. This kind of wilfulness had to be discouraged, and the blind lady threw caution to the winds so that Pat could be taught a lesson she would remember for the rest of her life. Pat's indignity was to have her harness handle released in favour of the long leash. Her blind owner had relieved her from her duties and was going to lead her on herself. Determinedly going ahead a few feet with a sense of superiority, the blind owner was shocked to the core to feel the dampening effect of cold water around her ankles and her feet stuck into deep mud. Pat watched with an air of considerable interest, and was not surprised when her owner took up the harness again and asked to be taken back home for a change into dry socks and shoes.

Lassie

Lassie lived in the busy north of England industrial district of Preston and had to take her mistress daily by train to Warrington, another busy town. Like many Guide Dogs she had no worries on trains and coped efficiently with platform arrivals and departures. She was well known, and her mistress was always given a friendly "Good night" when she left the train at Preston at the end of each day's work. One evening the pattern of events was no different from the rest and Lassie and mistress were given the familiar and expected "Good night" at Preston. As they were making their way out of the station, an agitated "Miss, Miss" behind them was so unexpected that for a few seconds the blind owner wondered if they were making for the wrong ticket barrier on their way out. "Excuse me, miss," the man's voice continued, "but your dog is carrying one of our cups. Can we have it back, please?" Lassie's mistress was hurt and then amused to find a British Railways cup in her dog's mouth and came to the conclusion that her guide occasionally found dregs of sustaining liquid under the seat, but on this particular evening had arrived at Preston before she had finished her refreshment. The obvious answer was to take the cup home with her.

Sacha

Guide Dogs may or may not be aware of their owners' incapacities, but there are many stories of their amusing actions to obviate the necessity for their masters and

mistresses having to wait at the rear of queues. It indicates that they are aware of the special difficulties their owners have to face if they are in open contest with sighted people. The following story is typical and yet unusual in the extreme measure of its solution.

Sacha lived in Liverpool, and was not left at home when her blind master and his wife went to celebrate New Year's Eve in the customary manner of the north of England. A good time was had by all, and it appeared on arrival at the bus shelter for the return journey that they had not been alone in the revelry of the evening. A large gathering of teenagers in the shelter made it vocally known that if anybody was not to find room on the last bus, it was not they who were going to be the unlucky ones. Sacha's master worshipped his dog, but he did not expect her to achieve the impossible by leading him to a bus and then negotiating the steep step up on to the platform, an undertaking she could hardly be expected to do at speed. He and his wife began to be resigned to a long walk home.

As they were discussing the problem the bus arrived, and the determined crowd surged forward to stake their claims in the struggle for precious places. When the bus drew up Sacha shocked everybody present by leaping aboard and standing side on, barring the path to all intending passengers except her master, for whom she had left a small gap. The episode was greeted at first by a stunned silence, but the atmosphere was soon broken in the usual British fashion by a burst of amusement and ungrudging admiration.

Plate 17. Obstacles on both sides.

Plate 18. Making a detour.

Plate 19. A busy pavement.

Sammy

Stories about Guide Dogs would be incomplete without a picture of other people's reactions to the new member of the family circle. Perhaps the other partner in a marriage finds the presence of a large dog at the side of their loved one rather strange company, and one which may lead to complications. The wife of a market gardener in Kent could not possibly believe that her husband would be safe on the roads with his first Guide Dog, Sammy, an Alsatian. She was wise enough to realize that her own views would do nothing to help her husband's confidence, for she had seen that he, too, was not brimming over with courage in his early days of association with his first dog.

After about three weeks of experience, Sammy and his master left the house to go into the town, which they had attempted only once or twice previously. Reaching the kerb at a major crossing and hearing no traffic, Sammy was instructed to go forward. Half-way across there was a sudden swishing sound at which Sammy turned swiftly right and then left as the sound passed. A bewildered master was even more confused as the familiar voice of his wife was heard calling, "I will never worry about Sammy or you again!" She confessed she had been following in the rear as she could not believe her husband would be safe. The swishing noise, she explained, was made by three bicycles which had appeared suddenly rushing downhill towards Sammy and her husband.

Mick

Another wife outlined the change which took place in her life with her husband during the years when he had no Guide Dog, and after Mick arrived. Before Mick's reign both partners in the marriage had independent jobs, which meant the wife had to take her husband for his bus and arrange for him to be met at the other end. She was never wholly certain if the escort would be on time, or even if it would be there at all. Mick's arrival brought her considerable relief as she knew her husband need not now be dependent on anybody, not even on herself. Another change she confessed she would never have foreseen: before Mick's arrival, her husband was at a loss when they entertained friends, as the only experiences he had known were those he had met in company with her. His attempts at conversation, therefore, were always accounts of what she had described to him on their walks. After Mick's arrival he attended Toc H meetings without her, and went visiting friends alone with his dog. His tales then took a new and refreshing turn and he could "keep his own end up" perfectly well, much to his wife's delight and interest.

Chapter Seven

THE BREEDS DISCUSSED

GUIDE Dogs in Britain have been drawn from breeds qualifying for the minimum height requirements of nineteen inches to the shoulders (see Chapter Two). To a very large extent this has confined the sources of supply to Alsatians, Collies and more recently, Labrador Retrievers, each concentrated into three periods of development and training. Although the choice has been restricted to these three breeds, a reflection of their intelligence, temperament and trainability, the selection of Guide Dogs is so thoroughly studied, that no individual dog of any breed, even if it has provided few Guide Dogs, is overlooked if it is likely to have the necessary qualities. Obviously, there are relatively few drawn from outside the ranks of the three principal breeds, and although it would be unfair to do injustice to any breed from which Guide Dogs are selected, only in the Alsatians, Collies and Labrador Retrievers are found the factors which have dynamically determined the course of selection and training as a whole.

It may seem a long time ago, for fashions change so rapidly that even the brief post-war popularity of the Miniature Dachshund seems a decade away, but it is

really only a few years since the Alsatian was the most popular breed in Britain. Its admirers were spread evenly through all the sections of the community. The large dog was to be seen as much in the back streets of industrial towns and cities as in the quiet lanes of the countryside. The Alsatian is not a native of this country. The first sight the British public had of the dog, and few saw the early arrivals, was during the First World War of 1914–18 when some found their way across the Channel as "prisoners-of-war". They were seen to be far more friendly and adaptable than their rather fearsome countenance appeared to suggest. Many of the soldiers were quick to sense the majesty of the dog, a man's dog if ever there was one, and were considerably flattered by the reaction of their wives and girl friends when they brought them home. The British soldier never loses an opportunity to acquire a dog if he is given half a chance and many, in both wars, found a temporary or a permanent home with the advancing armies.

The name of the dog is a typical example of a British compromise, for the breed is correctly the German Shepherd dog with a history of work in its background, but the title was not acceptable to the post-war mood of the people. As it was discovered that a proportion of the new imports came from Alsace-Lorraine, the dog was re-styled the Alsatian Wolf-hound and soon was generally dubbed the Alsatian. Its qualities were new, exciting, and appealing, and its association with daring and adventurous exploits were capitalized by film-makers in the revolutionary series of Rin-Tin-Tin, a hero with dash and determination seriously to rival the traditional cowboy in the hearts of cinema-goers.

It is hardly surprising that a dog with such matchless qualities as the Alsatian was the basis for Guide Dog work both in Britain and overseas. Their adaptability for, and success in this work was the reason why the first blind persons owning dogs extolled their virtues and thereby gave confidence to others to follow their example. Alsatians were the "first of the few" in the twentieth century's new attack on the effects of blindness. The breed's many admirers have much to take pride in as they look back on these early achievements. Nor is the past entirely forgotten, for the breed is still considered when selections are made of dogs for training. At one Training Centre, an Alsatian bitch which had proved an outstanding Guide Dog was recently purchased for breeding and the result of her first litter was being awaited with an interest and excitement which would have warmed the hearts of the breed's devotees.

The dog's appearance is well known, but the different varieties of colour may not be seen as often in Britain as in Europe. Colour for Guide Dog work is not an issue of selection, but for police duties white may be considered a drawback. The Alsatian can be black, white, black and tan, brown, fawn or several shades of grey. The height of the dog is around twenty-two to twenty-six inches, with good bone and plenty of muscle. In temperament she is highly individualistic, with acute senses and a high intelligence. She is very faithful, can be suspicious of strangers, and is quick and fearless in her reactions. One outstanding characteristic of the breed is its remarkable ability to think out situations for itself.

The Alsatian had excelled in police and military work

on the continent of Europe. The tremendous experience which trainers had gained in these spheres of work made the breed an obvious choice when a beginning was made in Guide Dog training in Germany, Switzerland and France. Encouraging progress was made, the trainers gained vital knowledge and confidence of the dog's powers, and the British pioneers obviously and naturally utilized this basis on which to build their own foundations. All the first classes to be trained at Wallasey were Alsatians.

From 1931 until the outbreak of the Second World War, Guide Dogs in Britain were predominantly Alsatians, although a few specimens of other breeds had also been trained. Two worrying features had already been reported back by blind persons who had spent enough time with the dogs for their comments to be seriously considered.

The Alsatian with its power and masculinity was not always an easy proposition for unskilled blind women, particularly those who were getting on in years. A big dog, whatever the breed, poses something of a problem for slightly-built women, and when blindness has restricted their physical capabilities, their difficulties are correspondingly increased. The Alsatian was a dog with a masculine history. Its work was normally controlled by men at war, on police duties, and in the hardy school of the countryside. A few women, chiefly expert breeders and handlers, were as much at home with the breed as men, but blind women do not often fall into this category.

Secondly, between the wars, there occurred a spate of Alsatian breeding which always attends the popularity

of a dog which the general public takes to its heart. Every breed has its genuine admirers and fanciers to whom the real qualities of a dog are of first and only importance. The increase in a breed's popularity, however, often attracts those whose only interest is in a dog's commercial value, and who are unable to resist the temptation of breeding too many litters. Eventually the market is flooded with puppies which may or may not have been bred from the best stock, and, slowly but surely, imperfect examples of a breed find their ways into homes and subsequently into the ownership of national bodies. It was in this way that the quality of the Alsatian began to decline, and consequently, a few which had found their ways into the ranks of the Guide Dogs became less effective and reliable.

When the outbreak of war came in 1939 the future of the Alsatian as far as a first choice for Guide Dog work was concerned was finally settled. The breed was called upon to do work of national importance for the Government, and all the best specimens were taken by the Ministry of Supply, the Ministry of Aircraft Production and the Army. The work was physically exacting and dangerous and attracted only the best dogs, whose achievements in work and obedience trials had already been tested. The sources of supply for the Guide Dogs were thereby immediately curtailed, especially for those which would have provided the most reliable members.

Before examining the action which had to be taken to strengthen the numbers caused by the call of the Alsatian for an emergency rôle, a description of what this excellent dog was called upon to do is most revealing

as an assessment of its intelligence and trainability.

The Ministry of Supply required trained dogs to take over from men the important but unproductive jobs of guarding railway sidings where foodstuffs, clothes, and other supplies for the nation tempted the petty pilferer. Stores, vehicle parks and ammunition dumps also used up manpower, and trained dogs were able to fulfil a useful national service by greatly reducing the numbers of watchmen. When the stalemate of the early "phoney" war came to its end and was replaced by enemy bombing raids and the threat of invasion, the early successes of the dogs encouraged their further training. They gave warning of the presence of suspicious strangers on deserted beaches, and sought for the wounded and the dead among the debris of air attacks. The Ministry of Aircraft Production pressed them into service to watch and guard aerodromes, where both the size of the territory and the value of the planes were enough to give premature grey hairs to those in charge.

The Army, remembering the notable services that Alsatians had given the Germans in the previous conflict, was particularly interested in using them and opened a War Dogs' Training School in which dogs were prepared for action through a systematic and exacting course. In the war the Army's dogs gave most distinguished service as guards, trackers, and Red Cross dogs, whilst their achievements in finding paths through minefields was consistently remarkable. They kept pace with all the developments of modern war to the extent of being dropped by parachute for liaison and messenger duties.

Guide Dog trainers, experienced only in the training

of the Alsatian found that they had to consider other breeds more readily available. Unfortunately, they had had no experience in working other breeds; for one thing, their time had been fully taken up training the Alsatian; for another, there never seemed any reason for them to experiment with alternative breeds. Now there was no choice.

The Collie was the breed which provided most of the extra replacements for the "war-working" Alsatians. The breed needed no introduction to the public for it was already a firm favourite, and like the Alsatian had aspired through "Lassie" to the realms of "film star" appeal.

The working Collie, or sheep dog, is often different from the specimens of the breed which are exhibited on the show bench, and it was the working Collie which was introduced for Guide Dog work during the 1939–45 war. The Shetland Sheepdog, called the "Sheltie" and the Old English Sheepdog are two examples of show-dogs with little recent background of work. The working Collie is found all over Britain, but many of the cross-breeds cannot be officially recognized by the Kennel Club because the mixture of the different varieties would make their titles too complicated and indistinct for classification. The Bearded, Smooth-haired, and Rough-haired Collies are the types recognized and registered as such.

The working Collie has been developed for work chiefly in the remote and wild sheep-rearing areas of Wales and Scotland and are known affectionately as Welsh and Scotch or "Border" Collies.

The Welsh Collie falls conveniently into three main

groups: The first includes the type of dog which attracts much interest at the famous Sheepdog Trials which are held in Wales in the summer and autumn. This dog is not a pure native and is now bred both for work and trial competition purposes. Much passion is aroused by the Sheepdog Trials and the tests of obedience and training are no longer restricted to Welsh competitors with the inauguration of the International Trials.

Another type of Welsh Collie is found chiefly in the border counties of Monmouthshire, Glamorgan, and Gloucestershire, and other fringe areas towards the north. The sheep which freely roam over these border regions are long-legged, lean, and mischievous climbers. On the mild slopes of the Forest of Dean, and the folds around the Wye and Severn, sheep dogs have been used by farmers to keep the local railway lines clear of the wanderers. The Forest of Dean is an area in which sheep have long had complete freedom to roam until a recent outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease necessitated some form of control for the protection of other farmers' stock. These conditions were ideal for dogs.

The real native dog is not so well known outside Wales, as the glamour of the Sheep Trial dogs and the holiday areas of the Cotswolds, the Severn, and the Wye have made those types far more familiar. The native is the farmer's sheep dog purely and simply, and is used for little or nothing else; it is usually distinguished by its colours of black and tan or grey.

The Border or Scotch Collie originally acquired its name as a convenient means of distinguishing the entries at the Sheepdog Trials. The border dwellers of England and Scotland, where the hilly terrain had

first encouraged sheep rearing, were keen participants at trials and as their breed of Collie was not unlike the breed from Wales, their geographical location became the label under which they competed and were known. The vast majority of competitors were Welsh folk and farmers of the Anglo-Scottish border areas, and the two names of "Welsh" and "Border" were efficient nomenclatures for the events of the day. The Border Collie is no longer confined to farmers of the border country, for sheep-rearing has become profitable both in Scotland and in England and has reached its peak in the rolling sheep farms of the Commonwealth. The working Collie is now to be found all over Britain and is spreading to other parts of the world.

The very name of the Collie is the key to its working potential. The Colley are the black-faced mountain sheep whose agility and hardiness forced the most practised shepherds to enlist help from the dogs they bred and trained for the work. Shepherd dogs became so essential, and were so trainable at gathering the flocks and guiding them home, that they became widely known as the "colley" dogs, a description of their occupation.

The Collie is an attractive looking dog, is graceful in movement, and supple and lithe in muscular reaction. It has a charming disposition and is devoted to children, and although friendly, it is a good barker and will give timely warning of the approach of strangers. The Collie is exceedingly quick in its reactions to new experiences and sensations, and there are some with a more than average sensitiveness to touch.

As Guide Dogs the Collies have been found to be as

intelligent, as adaptable, and as readily trainable as Alsatians. Only a working breed could have been tried as replacements for the Alsatian, and the background of the Collie and its size made it an obvious choice.

The Collie did not completely displace the German dog. This would hardly have been possible, for almost all the early Guide Dogs were Alsatians. The Collie has drawbacks as well as virtues, and sensitivity to touch followed by a rather abrupt reaction began to show in a few of the dogs after they had been with their owners for a short time.

At the end of the hostilities in 1945 the Alsatians began to reassert themselves. The better specimens were gradually released from war duties, and the higher price, coupled with the shortage of food had imposed restrictions on the breeding of large dogs so that fewer inferior puppies were being reared.

During the years of reconstruction the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association was as busy as any other organization in preparing plans for development which the war had postponed. The old Wallasey establishment had already been reorganized and extended in a new Training Centre in the Midlands,* and indications were already pointing to the need for a second centre elsewhere. In early 1950 it arrived in the opening of the Exeter Training Centre. The expansion of business is one thing when the demand is keen, but the provision of quality goods is another. Every Collie, every Alsatian, and indeed every single dog which could be turned into a Guide Dog, no matter what its breed, was wanted for training. Indeed, the percentage

*At Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.

of Alsatians and Collies to all other breeds was now being maintained from one year to another; the other breeds were very mixed—one or two Boxers, an odd Keeshond, a Dalmatian and a few Golden Retrievers and Labradors. From 1950 onwards the expansion programme at the two centres was still making great demands on the supply of dogs and a constant flow of puppies ready to go into full training was becoming a pressing need. It was decided to begin a Puppy Walking scheme so that enough puppies would be prepared and be ready for training. In this way very little time would be lost at the centres and withdrawals could be kept at as low a figure as possible.

Golden Retrievers, Alsatians, Collies, and Labradors were all put out to preliminary rearing and training with results which suggested that a new "star" in the shape of the Labrador Retriever had arrived. Thriving on individual care and attention the Labrador puppies showed such remarkable results that the backgrounds and strains of each new intake were carefully scrutinised. Very soon it was realized that they were consistently easy to train and that their post-training lives did not present the kind of complications which had affected some of the success of the Alsatians and Collies.

The Labrador Retriever is now the first choice for Guide Dog training and it far out-numbers the representatives of all other breeds together. It is not unusual to find that over eighty per cent and even ninety per cent of puppies out walking are Labrador Retrievers. A fair proportion of the outstanding Collie stock has been used up, and there has been no great

increase in the numbers of the good working Collies available for some years. But even so, a few specimens of the breed, as also a few Alsatians, may still be found in training, as well as an odd Golden Retriever and an odd puppy from other breeds.

The Labrador Retriever has one virtue in common with the Alsatian and Collie: a long and successful history of an eagerness for work. The Labrador, like the German dog, is a foreigner to this country, but was brought here before it. British seamen, like British soldiers, are quickly attracted to animals and perhaps it is not unlikely that future space travellers will import fresh creatures if there are any to be found. Early in the reign of Queen Victoria, trading merchants were returning to their home ports with Newfoundland dogs which became easily accustomed to the gentle climate and peaceful conditions of the English countryside to the great delight of their owners. They became involved in one of the favourite pastimes of the day, searching for game, and demonstrated a natural genius for retrieving.

An enthusiastic sportsman of the period, the Earl of Malmesbury, was quick to spot their outstanding talents and soon purchased a few of the dogs, an example which was followed by some of his contemporaries. Some of the original bitches were crossed with other breeds, often with other retrievers like the flat- and curly-coated varieties, and from these crosses emerged the Labrador as we know it. The early breeders had only one aim: to improve the dog's intelligence and its potential for retrieving in the field.

The Labrador's evolution as a first-rate dog for sport and field-trial activities has been achieved by breeding

courage, strength and intelligence into successive generations of stock. Much trial and experiment has gone into training for the gun, and trainers have developed various methods which together have contributed to the dog's extraordinary acceptance of the sharp and sudden sound of gunfire. Some believe the puppy should be introduced to it at meal-times when it associates the explosion with the pleasurable highlights of the day. Others advocate a system of baptism by concealment, in which a small-calibre blank cartridge pistol is fired off some distance from the dog and behind cover. As the object of this deception becomes used to the game the distance is reduced, until little or no attention is aroused. Often a companion stays close to the puppy to reassure it if there is any sign of shyness.

Introduction to the gun is only one aspect of training for a potential retriever. The dog has to be taught how to retrieve game by ensuring that its puppyhood has been based on obedience and discipline to commands, and to signals which can be developed later into a systematic use of ground. The early dog was encouraged to go through water to gain its prize, an obstacle which the Labrador's courage and stamina was able to overcome with great success.

The Labrador is now the most popular retriever of all, a position which has been maintained for many years. The working potential of the breed, however eagerly sought, would not by itself have brought it so prominently to the fore. It possesses beauty and charm in abundance, although these have been incidental in its evolution. Its two prime colours, yellow and black, have always been one of the attractions of favourite breeds.

A further outstanding quality is the dog's temperament. It is safe with children; it possesses the gun dog's instinctive tail and rear wagging to show its pleasure; the captivating habit of presenting master or mistress with a souvenir on their return home, tail and stern in motion whilst circling the house, is a picture typical of a Labrador. The dog knows no shyness or cowering, and there are no displays of bad temper towards strangers, and yet it is an excellent house dog; a first choice for the town or country dweller who fancies a "bit of shooting" in the long summer evenings; a prize possession of folk who like to attend field trials.

The Labrador's training rests on the first principles of all dog training, but she reacts and learns more quickly than the vast majority. She loves to be praised and encouraged and cannot endure harsh treatment, which can only lead to the breaking of her spirit and a loss of confidence in herself, so affecting her willingness for work. She associates praise with her master's pleasure and love for her, and tries harder and more consistently to deserve his affection.

These, then, are the breeds on whose backs the Guide Dog movement has travelled. They filled the requirements of adequate supply as well as all the other necessary characteristics with which Guide Dogs must be endowed. Perhaps if the circumstances had been different other breeds could have provided the recruits. A consistent source of supply is obviously of paramount importance, and a few breeds like Keeshonds and Afghans are rather thin on the ground. Boxers have always been numerically strong, but, on the whole, they lack the power of concentration over sufficiently long

Plate 20. Guide Dogs to be.

Plate 21. Ready for work.

periods to excel at the work. Golden Retrievers have the power and build to fill the bill, but they can be over-sensitive at times, and have a streak of stubbornness which can be a trial for blind owners. Spaniels possess most of the temperamental virtues, but on the whole are too small for human beings dependent on a harness-to-hand relationship.

Alsatians, Collies and Labrador Retrievers are all workers, adaptable, and in adequate supply, subject to the availability of the right specimens. The era of the Labrador appears likely to continue for some time, and it is difficult to foresee what circumstances could arise which might affect its selection. The public is a fickle worshipper, but as yet there are no signs which appear likely to affect the Labrador as supreme choice.

The problem of the future would appear to be to maintain the present progress, but not to miss any opportunities for reasonable experiment. Dogs are highly individualistic creatures and their willingness to work will vary from one to the other in the same way that children's often do. Speculation about the future can be only academic, but events and new techniques often take place side by side. Whatever the future holds in store, there can be no doubt that the past and present have blazed a trail of success that has ensured a solid base of knowledge and experience which will meet both the known and the unknown. One thing is certain, the sight of White Harnesses is likely to be more familiar in the streets of the towns and cities in the United Kingdom, and the happiness of blind persons will be witnessed in much greater abundance than ever before.

Chapter Eight

GUIDE DOGS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

THE admiration of the general public for Guide Dogs is high, very high, yet there are always some people who have a few qualms at the thought of dogs being trained to assist blind people. The doubters are, of course, concerned wholly with the dog's welfare. The suspicions in their minds may be connected with anxiety lest the apparently miraculous obedience is gained by some form of coercion, or they may have feelings of pity for a dog which is harnessed, so it seems, for long periods against its will.

The training procedures adopted in Britain show beyond any doubt that there are no grounds for fears about coercion. Each year more and more people see for themselves the dogs in training, happy during all stages of their education.

The suspicion that Guide Dogs are harnessed *against their will* for long periods is quite erroneous. The sight of the white harness to a Guide Dog can only be compared with the prospect with which a donkey is assumed to view a carrot. Seeing her harness for the first time in the day means that the start of her day's work is imminent and the Guide Dog shows her real pleasure

and delight, ranging from excited tail wagging to bodily contortions of glee which one owner aptly described as the rumba. Guide Dog owners are always surprised, and often amused, when they are asked if their dogs really enjoy what they do. It is true that a dog is working or is on duty when in the white harness, but it could be understood that although the dog may be on duty, this does not necessarily mean she is working in the human's interpretation of the word. The Guide Dog enjoys what she does in a way that escapes many human beings in their own occupations.

A dog is in harness only for so long as it is necessary. At all other times of the day or night she is as free as any other and is given opportunity for play, exercise, and rest which compare more than favourably with pet dogs. For most guides the harnessed period is usually the time occupied in going to and from the place of employment and the occasional shopping expedition. The persons who are more than normally concerned about a Guide Dog's welfare are the blind owners, who are all lovers of dogs, and particularly of their own precious pair of eyes. They are quick to take them off duty when they do not really need them, but this consideration is often received with mixed feelings by the dog.

Strangely enough, the citizens who may worry blind owners most of all are those who feel most warm-hearted towards them. Some people are such ardent admirers of Guide Dogs and feel so compelled to help their owners that, on occasions, their keenness goes beyond the bounds of wisdom. A Guide Dog and its owner waiting to cross at a road junction arouse in them a desire to offer assistance. There is little doubt that the

blind person usually receives these offers with gratitude, but it is important that they should give their full attention to their guide, and equally important that the latter's concentration is not interrupted at a crucial time. It is, therefore, unwise for a stranger to insist on giving help if the offer is declined, and a refusal should not be interpreted as a sign of ungratefulness on the part of the blind person. Away from road crossings, in shops, and in normal street negotiations, a friendly word from a passer-by and an expression of admiration for a striking and clever dog will gladden the heart of a proud owner, and will be met with the friendly courtesy that kindly words attract.

Every year, as the celebrations connected with the Gunpowder Plot approach, owners of Guide Dogs have a particularly anxious time. Few people can be unaware of the real terror that is experienced by some dumb animals when fireworks are let off. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals does everything it can to advise owners of pets to keep them indoors on Bonfire Night. The national press and the broadcasting and television authorities co-operate to the full in making known the risks. The warnings are hardly necessary for most dog owners, as they are usually careful to keep their pets indoors on wet November evenings. The only adjustment to their routine necessary is the duration and time of the last evening stroll, or, in some cases, even its complete abandonment in the face of the evening's noises.

Unfortunately, owners of Guide Dogs cannot always take the same precautions. The pet dog is normally at home awaiting the arrival of its master or mistress after

work at the office, but the Guide Dog will be leading *her* master or mistress home in the half light of early evening, or in complete darkness if it has been necessary to work late. This makes the working dog vulnerable to sudden flashes and explosions, for fireworks may be let off, not always in secluded places and patches of spare ground where their effects are quite harmless, but near to, and even on the public thoroughfares. If this occurred only on the evening of November 5 it would perhaps be possible for blind persons to make special arrangements with their employers, who could allow them to go home early. Fireworks are, however, released for public sale, days, and even weeks, before the night of the national festivities. Children like to buy a few at a time with their pocket-money and collections, and the necessity to store them proves too unexciting for eager eyes. Spasmodic explosions are not uncommon days before many parents are aware that the time for firecrackers and hot potatoes has come round once again. Guide Dogs and their owners are consequently vulnerable for almost any unspecified number of days around the "Fifth". The danger is not fanciful, for two dogs have already been spoiled because of careless use of fireworks, one being so badly affected that she had to be destroyed.

Members of the general public can play their part in the protection of Guide Dogs by ensuring that, as far as possible, their own children are alive to the distress that fireworks can cause to such valuable animals. Every effort which prevents careless use of fireworks near to built-up areas will be a vital contribution to their safety.

Thoughtlessness can affect Guide Dog owners in other

ways, less serious than the effects of fireworks, but liable, nevertheless to give them many days of needless worry. A new and inexperienced owner living near to the Potteries, justly proud of a lovely Labrador bitch, Meg, explained the kind of incident that can give rise to anxiety. For more than four years he had lived the life of a semi-hermit, daring only to venture a distance of about a hundred yards from his house to the local bus stop to meet his wife after her shopping trips. Meg's arrival brought a new freedom of movement and, with it, a job. Dog and owner revelled in walking to and from work, a distance of nearly two miles. The rain did nothing to spoil the wonder of being out again in the fresh air. Meg was a fast mover and the exercise performed miracles for his excess weight, and he felt convinced that all slimming problems could be solved by the possession of a briskly-moving dog. He had, in fact, reported to his Training Centre that in all respects Meg was doing well, but that he sometimes found her over-acceleration rather tiresome.

Meg was always ready for her white harness after breakfast, but was equally enthusiastic about an evening's rest whenever she saw their familiar street at the end of each day. She would walk briskly along it to her terraced-house home. One evening, their usual and happy routine was marred by an occurrence, small enough in itself, which worried the owner for a short time. On this occasion Meg suddenly swerved to one side without warning, and, already shaken by surprise, her owner was thrown temporarily off his balance by a sharp rap on his ankles. A child's low truck had been carelessly left outside a garden gate. As Meg and her

owner walked past, the long handle had swung to one side and into the line of his approach. Although the physical shock was momentary and slight, enough was done to give his comparative inexperience a nasty shaking. Being also one of the worrying types the mishap conjured up visions of what Meg's speed and his own lack of experience might come up against on another occasion. His formerly happy walks were clouded, by quite unnecessary anxieties, it is true, but at the time they were very real.

Since the end of the last war dogs have been increasingly debarred from hotels, restaurants, shops and other places where food is served, in the interests of the public. A greater sensitivity towards high standards of hygiene has prompted these measures which, by and large, have been intelligently accepted by dog owners everywhere. Guide Dog owners are, however, placed at a serious disadvantage by rules and regulations of this kind. No exceptions can be made, yet it is a remarkable testimony to good sound common sense, to know that a blind person and dog are rarely prevented from entering these public places, unless their reasons are frivolous and inessential. "No Dogs Allowed" is a sign which is now displayed more often than it is not. The words of a typical goodhearted small shopkeeper explain reasons which are quite obvious. "So often my customers' dogs are lacking in discipline. Not only do they knock over my wares and make themselves a general nuisance, but at times their dirty habits go unseen by their owners and I am left to clean them up. Would I allow a Guide Dog in here? Most certainly, because they are well trained and are kept under proper control." This attitude shows

that blind persons and Guide Dogs are earning for themselves a recognition which is, in essence, true. The public now realize that the dog is acceptable as a well-behaved member of the community.

Guide Dog owners are occasionally handicapped by restrictions which are applied by public transport bodies. Although British Railways generously permit Guide Dogs to travel without charge, (a considerable saving out of a blind owner's usually modest income) and the friendliness and help of ticket collectors, guards and porters are always at their service, there are still areas in which the local transport departments may not have been faced with Guide Dog owners wanting to use their buses. Whenever the problem has presented itself the understanding of the Committees concerned has inevitably demonstrated the goodwill that the dogs have earned. The rules are wise and sensible, for dogs which are travel-sick or lacking in good habits are a nuisance to everybody, but the Guide Dogs have justly gained the confidence of both private enterprise and local authorities, not merely on sentimental grounds, but from the realization that blind people cannot go about their business without them, nor are they an embarrassment when they are granted the privilege of doing so.

Nothing is of more interest to many members of the general public than income tax. A Lancashire Guide Dog owner on a visit to London lost his companion, and unwittingly raised a question which must have come before the House of Commons sooner or later. The recovery of the dog led to general rejoicing and the congratulations of his local M.P. who, impressed by the helplessness of the owner without his dog, asked in the

House if Guide Dogs could be considered as an expense, against which relief from income tax might be claimed. Information was given which assessed a blind owner's financial burden as around a pound a week; the fact that without a dog useful employment was denied the owner was stressed, and that such employment was a help to the country rather than the reverse. The matter was taken up with enthusiasm by members of all parties, but although sympathetic, the Chancellor of the Exchequer was unable to make any special allowances.

The cost of keeping a dog, without which a blind owner could be a financial burden to the country, is a matter which, doubtless, will again be the object of public inquiry and conscience.

Guide Dogs maintain certain standards which members of the public who are also dog owners might do well to ponder. One of the most significant is that the training of the dog and the control its owner has of its movements and behaviour are of immense value to the safety of all road-users, particularly motorists. Stray dogs, and those which are allowed to walk off leads, are a nuisance to pedestrians, other dogs and Guide Dogs, and are a continual source of anxiety to motorists who are never sure of their intentions. It is becoming fashionable for dog owners to allow their dogs off leads in main streets and side streets, regardless of their ability to control them. No dog is absolutely safe when let off the lead, and it is a sign of bad "dog sense" to believe they are. Unfortunately such light-heartedness can cause accidents to perfectly innocent motorists who may swerve or stop suddenly merely because they cannot decide what

a dog is going to do. Another dog, a cat, or a human friend across the street may be the cause of a slight deviation from its owner's side, and the worst may happen.

Nobody who has been connected with the training of dogs can watch such an apparent lack of concern for an animal's safety without a touch of real anxiety. Perhaps owners need to ask themselves if their dogs are more intelligent and better trained than the Guide Dogs of the Blind, for whom a harness or lead is obligatory whenever they are in the streets, on or off duty.

The control of Guide Dogs, combined with the care and attention which is bestowed on them, reduces the risks of their catching an infection or of spreading it. Stray dogs, and those not under control, will often be sources of infection. Many virulent complaints are caught from urine and excreta of sick animals. The Guide Dog's habits are those produced by careful puppy training, and it is rarely allowed to foul the streets or to stop and smell the indiscretions of other dogs. In these ways Guide Dogs are among the most educated of dogs, and their history is a part of the progress of education to better hygiene. Their example may well encourage the sighted owners of less gifted animals.

That the general public appreciate the work of Guide Dogs is shown in many ways. The Guide Dogs for the Blind Asociation, of which H.R.H. Princess Alexandra of Kent is patron, makes many forms of appeal in many parts of the country and they enjoy generous support. The presence of the dogs and their owners in the streets is received with friendliness and consideration. And those who know personally the gift conferred on a blind

person by his new "eyes" are forever devoted supporters of the movement.

The story of the Guide Dogs for the Blind has now been told, from its inception up to the present day. It is a moving and a living story, and its future may well contain as much wonder as its past. Although the dog possesses the qualities on which the story rests, it is no small tribute to the patience and understanding of man his master. The presence of White Harnesses among us is an inspiration, speaking of solitude overcome by courage, and of the unity of man and the animal, brought about by a common purpose, affection and trust.

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